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STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF FACULTY-STUDENT  
ADVISORY PROGRAMS AT THREE  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS

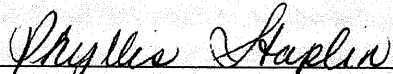
by Vicky P. Poole

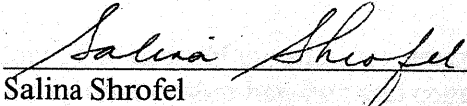
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# STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF FACULTY-STUDENT ADVISORY PROGRAMS AT THREE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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February 2003  
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The problem: The case study analyzed the faculty-student advisory programs of three secondary schools as perceived by participating students. The programs were described in terms of educational focus, relationships, sense of belonging, and communication.

Procedures: A 40-item survey was administered to 100 students at each of 3 large Midwest high schools with graduating classes of more than 400 students. A 5-point Likert scale was used to determine level of agreement with 33 statements that centered on the educational focus of their existing advisory groups, the relationships of the students and faculty in the advisory groups, the influence of the advisory program on sense of belonging, and the communication within the advisory group membership. Students added written information on the open-ended section of the survey. Two follow-up focus groups were formed at each of the three participating schools. One focus group in each school was comprised of students and the other of faculty. A follow-up 10-item survey was distributed to another 100 students at each of these three large high schools using a 5-point Likert scale in order to verify the 10 identified themes from the previous survey and focus groups.

Findings: Large schools provide more opportunity for isolationism of groups of students. Students can feel disconnected. Ten themes were identified as student perceptions of the advisory program in the secondary school environment. Students perceived the advisory programs as most effective for relationship building (student to student and student to adult) and for improving communication. The educational component varied from school to school. Collectively students did not perceive this component to be effective.

Conclusions: The heart of the advisory programs at the secondary level was found to be in the areas of relationship building and communication. In large high schools the program provided for connections of students to students and students to staff. Advisory programs at the secondary level provide a vehicle for communication, connecting the students to their school. The impact of the advisory programs is dependent upon the implementation skills of the advisor.



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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

For more than a decade, research and scholarly writing on effective middle school concepts and practices resulted in clear directions for middle level educators (e.g., Cole, 1994; Galassi, Gullledge, & Cox, 1997; George, 1987; Johnston, 1997; Mac Iver, 1990; Myrick, Highland, & Highland, 1986; O'Neil, 1997; Sardo-Brown & Shetlar, 1994; Vars, 1997). *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989), the National Middle School Association's paper *This We Believe* (National Middle School Association, 1992), recommendations from *Achieving Excellence Through the Middle Level Curriculum* (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1993), and others contributed a wealth of information. As a result, middle level educators implemented concepts that promoted positive behaviors, improved attitudes, and had the potential to improve academic achievement. These concepts included interdisciplinary teams, exploratory classes, and advisor-advisee programs.

There had been no extensive studies of high school reform since *High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America* (Boyer, 1983) until 1996 when the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) published *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, which resulted in recommendations for high school reform. A key concept emphasizes that the principal and teachers must create a climate favorable to education and do everything possible to sustain that climate. That climate would create connections for the students--connections to the curriculum, connections to the teachers and connections to each other. One of the components in the creation of that

environment stipulated that, "Every high school student would have a Personal Adult Advocate to help him or her personalize the educational experience" (p. 31). This differed from the typical homeroom experience.

Pope, Metha, and Webb (1997) found that through advisers, every student was treated as an individual and belonged to someone. Lee and Robbins (1995) emphasized the importance of belonging to create a positive school climate.

Advisory programs were first introduced during the 1880s according to Myrick et al. (1986). Wittmer (1993) reported that a principal introduced guidance as a curricular component of each English class in 1889 (cited in Galassi et al., 1997). Briggs (1920) and Hieronimus (1917) wrote that the teacher-advisor concept was implemented in junior high schools from 1900–1920 (as cited in Galassi et al., 1997). Advisers were imperative to prevent any one student from being neglected by his/her teachers.

"Irrelevance and anonymity, the late Ernest Boyer said, were the two words that came to his mind each time he entered a high school" (Lounsbury, 1996, p. 17). A packaged curriculum and bigness often characterizes high schools of today. The NASSP Executive Director, Timothy Dyer, stated in his preface to *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution* (1996), "If one theme could be extracted that is overarching and paramount, it is a message that the high school of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be much more student-centered and above all much more personalized in programs, support services, and intellectual rigor" (p. vi).

In response to this study many high schools have implemented their version of a personal adult advocacy program. This study examined the student perceptions of the

programs in practice at three Iowa high schools with enrollments exceeding 1,000 students as reported by the Iowa Department of Education.

### Rationale

Akin in the *Eight-Year Study of 1942* (cited in Lounsbury, 1996) delineated the state of secondary education. The commission that sponsored the study identified the following inadequacies that related to the irrelevance of the curriculum and the anonymity as expressed by secondary students:

1. Secondary schools do not prepare students adequately for the responsibilities of community life.
2. Schools neither know their students well nor guide them wisely.
3. Schools fail to create conditions necessary for effective learning.
4. The creative energies of students are seldom released and developed.
5. The conventional high school curriculum is far removed from the real concerns of youth.
6. The traditional subjects of the curriculum have lost much of their vitality and significance (p. 18).

In a 1996 survey of middle school teachers, parents, and students in five large Northeastern and Midwestern states, the advisory program received intense criticism of the gap between goal achievement and the current reality. A majority (75% of teachers and 68% of parents) responded that advisory programs were promising for helping students develop strong self-concepts and decision-making skills. However, only 32% of teachers and 40% of parents thought the program was fulfilling those goals. Nearly 90% of parents and teachers agreed that it was important for a student to have one adult to

whom he or she can turn with a problem. However, only about half of the parents and two-thirds of the teachers believed this condition existed for all students in the school (Johnston, 1997).

There is a dearth of research regarding advisory programs at the secondary level. There is a need to discover the effect this type of program has specifically regarding building relationships and a sense of belonging as perceived by the students. Research at the middle school level (Cole, 1994; Galassi et al., 1997; George, 1987; Johnston, 1997; Mac Iver, 1990; Myrick et al., 1986; O'Neil, 1997; Sardo-Brown & Shetlar, 1994; Vars, 1997) indicated that advisors in an advisor/advisee relationship could make a difference. This study attempted to determine the student perception of advisory programs at the secondary level.

#### Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this research study was to describe student perceptions of three secondary school advisory programs with a focus on student relationships and their sense of belonging.

#### Research Questions

The Grand Tour question is "What are the students' perceptions of the importance or relevance of their advisory program at this point in time in secondary learning?"

Subquestions include:

1. How would you describe the relationships in your advisory? With students?  
With your advisor?

2. How would you describe the effect advisories have had on overall school relationships?
3. What is the best thing about your advisory?
4. What needs to be improved in your advisory?
5. What activities typically occur during your advisory period?

### Significance of the Study

A study of student perceptions of secondary school faculty-student advisory programs is significant at this time of high school transformation. The NASSP Executive Director Timothy Dyer stated in his preface to *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution* (1996),

If one item could be extracted that is overarching and paramount, it is a message that the high school of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be much more student-centered and above all much more personalized in programs, support services, and intellectual rigor (p. vi).

The 82 recommendations that followed included having a personal adult advocate for each student.

Within two years of publishing the recommendations for reform, high schools throughout the nation responded with the implementation of a wide variety of advisory programs. While there have been many studies of advisement programs implemented at the junior high / middle school level, little has been done at the high school level to examine the current programs. If themes are identified, schools will have the information needed to improve their faculty-student advisory programs.



## Definition of Terms

Advisement: Small groups of students assigned to a certified teacher who is closely concerned with the students' fate (O'Neil, 1997). The term advisory is used interchangeably with advisement.

Advisor (Adviser): An adult who is closely concerned with a student's fate (NASSP, 1996).

Case study: A case study is an exploration of a "bounded system" or a case over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. The case being studied might include a program, an event, an activity, or individuals (Creswell, 1998).

Grand Tour question: Question that gives the participant an opportunity to be open. It is nondirective. It relates to the topic (McCracken, 1988).

Focus group: A focus group is a carefully planned discussion of approximately 6 to 10 similar persons. It is designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a non-threatening environment. The purpose of focus groups is to collect data from a focused discussion (Creswell, 1998).

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

"Irrelevance and anonymity," the late Ernest Boyer said, were the two words that came to his mind each time he entered a high school (Lounsbury, 1996, p. 17). A packaged curriculum and bigness often characterize high schools of today. Hardy (1999) wrote that high school is often a place that fosters conformity and intolerance. National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Executive Director Timothy Dyer stated in his preface to *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution* (1996),

If one theme could be extracted that is overarching and paramount, it is a message that the high school of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be much more student-centered and above all much more personalized in programs, support services, and intellectual rigor (p. vi).

The NASSP (1996) recommended that, "every high school student will have a Personal Adult Advocate to help him or her personalize the educational experience." (p. 31). This recommendation followed the National Middle School Association's position paper, *This We Believe: Developmentally Responsive Middle Level Schools* (1992), which calls for "an adult advocate for every student," as one of its 12 major themes. "The evidence is ever so clear that the personalization component is critical to meaningful school reform" (Dyer, 1996, p.8).

## History of Advisory Programs

Advisory programs were first introduced during the 1880s according to Myrick et al. (1986). Wittmer (1993) reported that a principal introduced guidance as a curricular component of each English class in 1889 (as cited in Galassi et al., 1997). Briggs (1920) and Hieronimus (1917) wrote that the teacher-advisor concept was implemented in junior high schools from 1900 to 1920 (as cited in Galassi et al., 1997). Advisers were imperative to prevent any one student from being neglected by his teachers.

In the early to middle 20<sup>th</sup> century the role of guidance to meet the personal and emotional needs of the early adolescent was seen as the responsibility of the teacher (Gysbers & Henderson, 1994). The objective of changing behavior was promoted. By the middle of the century guidance was integrated into the core curriculum (Gruhn & Douglass, 1956). The idea that guidance was everyone's responsibility grew in popularity, particularly with middle school practitioners.

Four middle school concepts have the potential for high schools to improve academic achievement, to improve student behavior, to foster positive interpersonal relationships between teachers and students, and to enhance the school's ability to address adolescents' cognitive psychosocial needs: the advisor-advisee programs, exploratory programs, interdisciplinary teams, and efforts to promote a positive school climate (Manning & Saddlemire, 1996b; Mac Iver & Epstein, 1991). Exploratory programs offer students an opportunity to take short courses in areas such as family and consumer science, the arts, and/or technology. Interdisciplinary teams involve teachers from different curricular certification teaching students with opportunities for multiple connections. Efforts to promote a positive school climate include the promotion of

positive behaviors. Advisor-advisee programs will be the focus of this research. These programs have the potential to impact the school climate.

### Key Concepts

Galassi et al. (1997) focused on the key concepts of advisement: relationship building and involvement. The program objectives serve both cognitive and affective goals. They may provide opportunities for teacher-advisee interaction, student-student interaction, improved communication, improved school spirit, a sense of belonging and a caring adult advocate for every student.

Sardo-Brown and Shetlar (1994) compiled a list of critical features of advisor-advisee programs from several recent authors (Gill & Read, 1990; James, 1986; Myrick et al., 1986):

1. Groups should meet at least three times per week.
2. Groups should remain intact.
3. All teachers should participate.
4. Continuous in-service training should be provided.
5. Teachers should be integrally involved in the planning and revision of the program (p. 23).

Ziegler and Mulhall (1994) proposed daily advisory group meetings with maximum group size of 15 students who retain the same advisor until graduation.

George (1987) surveyed middle school teachers and students regarding their perceptions of their own advisor-advisee program. Twenty-three of the 26 teachers believed the program was necessary. Twenty-four agreed that students should not be able

to choose their advisors, that advisors should be responsible for monitoring academic success, and that additional in-service would be helpful. Twenty-one believed the group size should be 10-15 students. There were mixed opinions regarding the number of meetings per week and length of the meetings. There were mixed opinions on integrating the grade levels and whether or not to grade the period.

The purposes of an advisement most frequently cited by the surveyed teachers in the study by George (1987) were to build positive teacher-student relationships, help students with the transition between grade levels, teach social skills, monitor students' academic progress, inform students about issues such as AIDS, and give students a time to relax. They also preferred to keep the same students for three consecutive years. Eight of 26 preferred a less structured program. Teachers wanted options in choosing activities compared to a planned program. On the other hand, students felt they should select their advisor and change it yearly. Students saw the purpose of advisement as a place to do homework and take a break. This survey was done in a rural community (George, 1987).

Literature suggests multiple reasons for establishing advisement programs at the middle school level. Many of these have applications at the high school level. The three most significant are communication, education and relationship building.

"Personalization is achieved when teachers and students have the time and the desire to develop a relationship" (Cresswell & Rasmussen, 1996, p. 27).

### Relationships

While restructuring may seem an organizational dilemma, "the real restructuring that is needed is not organizational but attitudinal" (Lounsbury, 1996, p. 18). He recommended to administrators that schools should provide the structure and planned



activities. However, he cautioned that too many paper-and-pencil activities would prohibit the time for the informal dialogue about personal, social, and academic concerns for which the program was intended.

Manning and Saddlemire (1996a) summarized positive relationships as follows:

Secondary administrators and teachers have long understood the advantages of positive relationships between educators and students. Trust, respect, mutual obligation, and concern for others' welfare can have powerful effects on educators' and learners' interpersonal relationships as well as learners' academic achievement and overall school progress (p. 41).

These factors lead to a sense of community. Sergiovanni (cited in Manning & Saddlemire, 1996a) defined a community as a collective involvement, mutual obligation, and moral awareness. Communities can provide a sense of belonging and feeling of shared goals. They list other reasons for building a sense of community:

1. The teaching and learning environment would be more comfortable and inspiring.
2. Learners sometimes feel anonymous in secondary schools.
3. Secondary students have an increased desire for friendships and social interactions.
4. Family life has changed with an increased divorce rate and one-parent homes.
5. There is increasing diversity in our schools.
6. Incidents of aggression and violence are increasing.

Sautter (1995) stated that the U.S. Department of Justice reported 3,000,000 crimes occur each year in public schools (cited by Manning & Saddlemire, 1996a).

Good children are raised by communities of adults who share common beliefs and values about what constitutes reasonable and appropriate behavior, who accept responsibility for sharing the wisdom of their years and experience with children, and who share a common commitment to all the children of the community and nation (Johnston, 1997, p. 9).

Several events have impacted this. There has been a dramatic increase in the number of two working adults' households. Mobility has led to a decline in the proximity of the extended family. Age segregation through childcare centers has limited the interactions with people from other age groups. A decline in the number of households with school-age children from 67% in 1960 to 20% in 1990 means fewer households have a direct investment in the welfare of children and schools. There is a cultivated aura of fearfulness regarding children. Young adolescents lack an immediate purpose when they do not contribute to their family's welfare. All of these events have contributed to the gradually reduced community-wide investment in child rearing (Johnston, 1997). Schools are increasingly challenged to fill this void. Advisories could help to provide a sense of community and belonging to its members.

Increasingly, students are becoming at risk. The changing society where the traditional family support systems are often missing, where drugs are easily accessible, where sexuality is confused, where incidence of AIDS is growing, and where teenage pregnancy continues to rise contributes to this condition. Yet the values, which are the foundation of America, must endure. To ensure this, they must be taught in school. Killin and Williams (1995) clarified that the intent of advisement was not to teach a particular set of values, but to strengthen their family's values, to teach communication,

leadership skills, goal setting, and acceptance of self and others. "School climate is affected dramatically when students learn to resolve conflicts through communication rather than through violence...which translates into a school climate that is orderly, safe, and free from violence" (p. 46). Shore (1996) added that personalization impacts the school climate and helps to curb the violence in schools.

Killin and Williams (1995) found that students who were not engaged in school were the ones who really participated in the advisory groups, who became more engaged in school, who showed success in the classroom, and who became a part of school activities and learning. Research conducted by George and Oldaker (1985) found that academic achievement improved, that there was an 80% reduction in discipline referrals, and that 80% testified that confidence in self-directed learning was positively affected. While other middle school concepts were also in place, it cannot be concluded that advisories singularly produced these results.

Schools that have strong group advisory programs are more successful at meeting students' needs for guidance, advice, and counseling and at lowering the proportion of students who will drop out before finishing high school. Based on principals' estimates, schools that provide students with extensive social support and frequent opportunities to discuss topics that are important to them by means of a regularly scheduled group advisory period are more successful than other schools in increasing the proportion of its students who stay in school until high school graduation (Mac Iver, 1990).

Gary Whelage and Robert Rutter (as cited in Testerman, 1996) used data from *High School and Beyond*, a longitudinal survey of approximately 30,000 sophomores from 1,105 public and private high schools nationwide, to study student alienation and

rejection of school. One variable in their analysis was teacher interest in students. When those who eventually became dropouts were asked to rate teacher interest in students, over 50% of all ethnic groups gave marks of fair to poor. "Clearly, improving students' perceptions of the degree of concern that teachers feel for them would positively affect students' attitudes about school and increase the likelihood of their staying on to graduate" (Testerman, 1996, p. 364). Improving the teacher-student climate had a significant effect in reducing school failure in the Chicago Public Schools (Miller, 2000). The data analysis of middle school research by Anfara and Brown (1998) indicated that participants believed in the importance of an adult who cares for an adolescent. The students in this study perceived the adults as care givers rather than discipline givers.

Teachers at Lely High School in Naples, Florida, created an advisement program for a group of at-risk students whose grade-point averages were 1.5 or less on a 4-point scale. During the 21 weeks, students in the experimental group were absent from school significantly fewer days than were similar students with no teacher advisor. The difference between the two groups was statistically significant. All but two of the teacher advisors reported positive changes, which included improved grades and friendlier, happier advisees. "A school may provide the best instruction in the world, but, if a segment of the school population is not present physically or is feeling alienated or absent mentally, of what value is excellent pedagogy?" (Testerman, 1996, p. 365). Dale (1995) agrees that the counterpart of intellect is affect, and that school faculties must address both aspects of students' lives in order to be effective teachers. "Authentic relationships with teacher mentors and coaches also foster authentic learning for students" (Mackin, 1996, p. 15).

Teachers at Huntington Beach High School in Hunting Beach, California, identified their "top 10" at-risk students and provided them with personal attention. They began with an adopt-a-kid program with an adult meeting with the student before school, after school, or over lunch. The principal initiated "most improved student" awards. During the first year of the personalization effort, the school had the lowest expulsion rate and the lowest suspension rate in the entire district. Fifty-one percent of the students on "the list" improved their grade-point averages. Students working closely with teachers were credited with the improvement. In a study done at Ramey School in Puerto Rico, Hinman (1992) found the implementation of an advisement program reduced the number of student discipline referrals and suspensions.

There are patterns of behavior among achieving children (Clark, 1983). Achievers spend more time in conversations with adults, in fact, 8 to 10 times more. Achievers receive explicit achievement training (music lessons, sports, etc.). Achievers have routine in their after-school life. Achievers plan for tomorrow and for the future. Achievers participate in activities that provide opportunities to read and write at a higher level and with purpose. Achievers participate in constructive learning besides homework. Underachievers over-participate in unsupervised recreational activity. Johnston (1997) reported that achievers describe themselves as doing something important in their homes, families, and communities.

There are significant organizational changes that occur as students transition from middle school to high school. The teaming occurring in most middle schools today provides the students with a minimum number of teachers and a consistent schedule. Due to the breadth of curricular offerings at the high school, students lose that consistency and



stability. At the same time changing demographics has resulted in a reduced investment in child rearing. Advisory programs help to fill this void by providing a sense of an extended family. However, barriers do exist that limit the success of these programs.

### Barriers

From experience, middle schools have provided some essential learnings:

1. Considerable staff development is essential to establish an advisory.
2. Advisories are difficult to maintain at effective levels.
3. Advisories require constant monitoring and ongoing support.
4. Advisors find it difficult to change from the position of instructor to the role of facilitator and listener.
5. Advisors find it difficult to direct activities which are not graded (Lounsbury, 1996).

There is a resistance to restructuring. Lounsbury (1996) quoted Henry David Thoreau when he warned "Beware of enterprises that require new clothes, but not rather a new wearer of clothes" (p. 20). Change efforts break down at the level of the individual classroom. According to Lounsbury, "Informal, ongoing conversations among teachers will move revised practices along better than a single staff development" (p. 21). While including all staff members in the advisory program has a greater effect on total school climate, consideration should be given to using only staff members who want to be group facilitators. According to Killin and Williams (1995), this eliminates the sabotage that can occur from staff members who are uncomfortable with the affective components. There must be a commitment to the program for it to be successful. Everyone should be clear on the purpose and trained for implementation. The leadership of the principal is

imperative. "Once you understand the value of advisory programs, it becomes a matter of passion and patience—a passion for the value and for making it work, and the patience to see the results" (Killin & Williams, 1995, p. 50).

There are combinations of forces that are barriers to the success of an advisement program. Some were programs initially developed by counselors, that led to teacher resistance – "I'm not a trained counselor." Some provided unstructured free time or trivial activities that were unconnected to school goals. Others provided activities designed to start discussions that many teachers felt uncomfortable leading. In the preceding survey the most common activities cited by teacher in order of frequency were informal conversations among students, silent reading or study time, teacher discussion with the group, a group activity, and lastly, teacher discussion with an individual student. The most desirable activity--conversation among teachers and students-- was the least likely to happen (Johnston, 1997).

The curriculum that works best is the one that meets the needs of the students (Killin & Williams, 1995). They suggest students and staff could be surveyed. World issues should be considered. Sensitivity units to address the needs of social awareness and challenge courses could be used. Although units could remain the same from year to year, they can be enhanced with new activities. The curriculum should be activity based. In this way, advisement would not be viewed as schoolwork. Advisors should always process the meaning and long-learning implications of each activity. These activities should be linked to the students' lives and their application to social skill development. Other units follow the developmental counseling approach and encompass

personal/social, career, and educational goals. It is the directive of these authors that the counseling department coordinates the advisory program.

Students tend to view advisement activities as either for schoolwork or for younger students only. For the advisory program activities to be successful, the program must meet the students' current needs as perceived by the students. Frost (1990) defines advising as a relationship based on shared responsibility in which students participate in the academic planning process. Walz (1984) emphasizes the importance of improving the students' ability to make their own decisions. The teacher has a pivotal role in the success of the faculty-student advisory program.

#### Teacher Role

Vars (1997) agreed that guidance should be a high priority for middle school education. He recommended using small group advisories for the implementation of guidance into the school program and identified four chief advantages. Small groups provide an intimate environment to address adolescent concerns and decisions. Involving all staff demonstrates a total school commitment to the guidance program. Having a regularly scheduled group demonstrates that guidance is part of the curriculum and makes articulation possible. Distinct disadvantages exist. Some staff will be unwilling or unable to assume the role of guidance facilitator. Scheduling and coordinating a total school program may be difficult. Finally, the guidance issues may be isolated from the rest of the school curriculum. Vars concluded that the success of the program rests squarely on the competence and commitment of the staff.

While the leadership of the principal is imperative, the teacher is the key to the success of the advisory program (Cole, 1994). If a teacher does not implement the

program with his/her advisory group, the program fails for that group of students and teacher. Van Hoose (as cited in Cole, 1994) listed seven reasons why an advisement program is often not popular with teachers:

1. Parents do not understand the program.
2. Many administrators are unconcerned about it.
3. Most teachers have had little formal training as an advisor.
4. Teachers do not understand the goals of advisement.
5. Advisory takes time that could be used more effectively in teaching preparation.
6. Some teachers do not want to engage in a program that requires personal sharing.
7. When there is little staff development and leadership, teachers do not receive positive feedback from students.

George and Bushnell (as cited in Cole, 1994) found it troubling that many teachers regarded an advisory program as essential while an equal or greater number viewed it as beyond the realm of their teaching responsibility. In a survey of 224 middle school teachers and counselors in three Eastern states, 77% answered that their school needed an advisement program. Only 64% felt positive about being advisors. The biggest reservation was the time consideration. "When a vocal minority of the faculty opposes the program, success is jeopardized" (Cole, 1994, p. 6).

As with any change, communication and clarification are crucial. Marian O'Neil (1997) has determined what advisement is and is not. It is not counseling. It is a time of caring and sharing. It is a time for adults to show they care for each student. It is not free

time. It is a time of freedom from judgment. It is a time for opening the lines of communication. It is a time for teachers to show more humanity. As advisors, teachers must learn new roles. They become facilitators rather than dispensers of knowledge. White and Greenwood (1991) suggest that the teaching of study skills initially allows teachers to blend their traditional role with the new adviser role.

Preparing middle school students for transition to high school focuses on three areas: (a) academic requirements for graduation and grades, (b) co-curricular activities, and (c) social activities (Jett, Pulling, & Ross, 1994). They recommended that regularly scheduled and planned advisory programs would provide opportunities for teachers to inform and advise students while monitoring their academic progress.

Advisers can distribute information and facilitate dialogue among students about important decisions students are beginning to make, such as relationships among family and friends, using drugs and alcohol, engaging in sexual behavior, or becoming involved in violent and/or criminal behavior (p. 89).

Early adolescents need social and emotional support to succeed as students. Mac Iver (1990) suggested:

discussing problems with individual students, giving career information and guidance, developing student self-confidence and leadership, and discussing academic issues, personal or family problems, social relationships, peer groups, health issues, moral or ethical issues and values, and multicultural issues and intergroup relations (p. 459).

Changing teachers every period, students may feel that no teacher or other adult in the school really knows them, cares about them, or is available to help them with problems.

Students need a feeling of belonging (Lee & Robbins, 1995). High school staff and older students need to play some planned and organized role in the lives of ninth graders in the transition process (Allen & Sheppard, 1992). Training and support must be provided to faculty and students. The degree to which parents and other community members are involved in the development of the advisory program is critical to its success.

In a study of the relationship of school belonging and values to academic motivation, Goodenow and Grady (1993) found that students who do have a high sense of belonging in school are more motivated and academically engaged than those whose sense of belonging was low. The teacher is the key to the success of the advisory program (Cole, 1994). The outcomes of an advisement program are most influenced by the personality, views, and attitudes of the teacher who conducted the advisory group (Boorstein, 1997). This requires the teacher to change their traditional role of facilitating the delivery of their curriculum to the new role of building relationships. Ongoing training of the personnel involved is a key to success (Rappaport, 1993). Four high schools have reported the following benefits.

### Benefits

New Trier High school in suburban Chicago, Indian Creek High School in Trafalgar, Indiana, Freedom High School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and McCluer North High School in Florissant, Missouri, have successfully implemented various versions of personal adult advocate programs. They have reported a number of benefits to students, staff, and family. The benefits as compiled by Pope et al. (1997) are (Items 2-6, Dale, 1995):

1. Students perceive that the school shows a personal concern for them as



individuals.

2. Teachers get to know students they would not normally have in class, and to become familiar with a larger portion of the student body.
3. Students have greater opportunity to develop more and closer friendships with peers.
4. Students have the opportunity to discuss issues of importance to them with peers and an adult in school.
5. The program creates a "sense of family or belonging."
6. Both advisees and the adviser have a place to go (every day), where they can just sit and talk, relax, and not feel pressured.
7. Teachers have the opportunity to get to know a colleague more personally and are able to learn from each other.
8. Teachers develop a broader school perspective, and respect between staff members improves.
9. Inter-relationships within the school focus on cooperation and working together rather than on position and authority.
10. Counselors, through the advisement channel, tend to receive problems that are already clearly defined so the school's helping resources are more quickly identified and focused on the specific areas of student concern.
11. Students are provided the means, and are frequently encouraged to assess themselves.
12. Students have more opportunities, and therefore demonstrate an increased willingness to share their concerns about the school.
13. Parent contact is regular and positive in nature as opposed to sporadic and

crisis-oriented (pp. 1-2).

“Implementing an adviser/advisee program is a complex process and may take several years of shaping, redefining, and evaluating to finally achieve a program that fits comfortably within a given school.” (Pope et al., 1997, p.12).

### Summary

Advisory programs were first introduced during the 1880s. In the early 1900s the advisory concept was implemented in the junior high schools where it has been integrated into the core curriculum. In 1996 the National Association of Secondary Principals wrote 82 recommendations for secondary school improvement. One of these was that every student should have a personal adult advocate. This ignited an effort across the United States to implement a type of program that would provide an advocate for each student at the secondary level.

This review of literature provided several areas to consider. As our society has changed, young people have lost a sense of connection with adults and often with each other. A significant adult as recommended by the NASSP has the potential for filling that void. Advisor-advisee programs have been established for many years in the middle schools. There is a dearth of literature on advisory programs at the high school level. The limited research at that level suggests that advisory programs could be effective at providing those connections for students. The connections could be student to adult and student to student. The emphasis would be to build those relationships. This could lead to a sense of community and belonging. Advisers could be responsible for monitoring academic success. Advisory programs could provide a time for informal dialogue about personal, social, and academic concerns. The success of the program is dependent upon

the competence and commitment of the staff. However, the literature indicates there may be resistance among the teachers.

## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY

The research design, data collection, and data analysis for this study was based on descriptive qualitative methodology. Creswell (1998) defined it as “an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (p. 255).

Among the reasons for undertaking a qualitative study as listed by Creswell (1998) are the nature of the research question, the need to present a detailed view of the subject, and receptivity of the audience. The nature of this study required a qualitative approach to understand student perceptions of secondary school faculty-student advisory programs. As we each face the task of personalizing schools for our young people, it is prudent for the educational leader to examine the personal adult advocate challenge posed by the NASSP (1996) to determine the impact it has on young people. Creswell (1998) stated that the need for the study might be based on personal experience with the issue. For the past five years, I have been intricately involved in the development and implementation of an advisory in a large high school.

The philosophical assumption that guided the study was that the knowledge is within the meanings people make of it (Creswell, 1998). Through talking with these people, knowledge will evolve. The single focus of this study was to understand the students' perceptions. In *Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach*, Merriam (1988) asserted that “research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making

significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education” (p. 3).

Further, Merriam (1998) identified qualitative case study as “an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena” (p. 2).

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) defined case study as the observation of a specific situation, program, strategy, or group, which involves the detailed examination of one setting, single subject, depository of documents, or particular event. Yin (1994) contended that case study is an empirical inquiry, which uses multiple sources of data to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear. Creswell (1998) warned that the researcher must identify his or her case or issue and determine if it is worthy of study and then consider whether to study a single case or multiple cases. “The more cases an individual studies, the greater the lack of depth in any single case” (p. 63). He recommended no more than four. Three cases were the focus of this study.

Merriam (1998) in her discussion of case study research in education identified four characteristics, which she labeled “essential properties of a qualitative case study” (p. 11). Case study research is particularistic, meaning that it focuses on a particular or specific situation, event, program, or phenomenon. It is descriptive, providing a “thick” description of the phenomenon under study; heuristic, providing insight and illumination of the relationships of variables within the phenomenon; and inductive, allowing the generalizations, concepts, and hypotheses to emerge from the data which is grounded in the context of the phenomenon.

Specifically, this study used an iterative (Miles & Huberman, 1984) process throughout the following four stages of research: (a) developing a survey instrument,

(b) conducting a survey with students who have experienced an advisor-advisee relationship, (c) interviewing selected survey respondents in focus groups, and (d) data analysis.

A list of preliminary decisions suggested by Janesick (1998) served as tentative blue prints for qualitative research projects. Janesick's list included the following data collection decisions: selection of a site and participants, selection of appropriate research strategies, access and entry to the site, and agreements with participants. A plan for analysis of data was also a part of the research design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

#### Selection of Site and Participants

Three large high schools with similar enrollments of over 1,000 were the sites for the research. Each has experienced a type of faculty-student advisory program for more than three years. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the purpose is not to focus on the similarities that can be developed into generalizations, but to detail the specifics that give the context its flavor.

#### Selection of Appropriate Research Strategies

Merriam (1998) asserted that case study research is "an ideal design for understanding and interpreting observations of educational phenomena" (p. 2). Marshall and Rossman (1989) proposed the use of qualitative case study for research that is "exploratory or descriptive and that stresses the importance of context, setting, and subjects' frame of reference" (p. 46). In order to gain an understanding of the students' perception of the advisory groups, information was initially collected through a survey distributed to selected groups of 100 students at each of the three schools. "Criterion"



sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon. A survey was designed as a primary data source of this study because it was a reliable method of collecting information from people about their attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. The results provided numerical data that served as part of the organizational framework for the subsequent in-depth interviews (Fink & Kosecoff, 1998; Thomas, 1999), and as Borg and Gall (1989) indicated, survey research is appropriate for investigating a wide range of educational situations and accounts for a substantial portion of educational research. The three write-area opportunities concluding the survey provided narrative data as well. The survey (Appendix A) was developed following the examination of multiple survey instruments used with secondary students. Specifically, the Student Opinion Survey (National Study of School Evaluation, 1995) and the Omaha Public Schools High School Survey (Bradley, 1985) provided the basis for the development of the statements used in the first survey instrument. It was administered during the first week of May 2002.

In addition to the survey information, qualitative data were collected in three focus groups of six students who responded to the survey. Six students (three males and three females) at each school were interviewed. They were chosen from a pool of volunteers by the school principal upon the basis of known diverse opinions of advisor-advisee, for "maximum variation" as suggested by Creswell (1998). The face-to-face interviews were semi-structured and occurred during the second and third weeks of May. The following exploratory questions were asked:

- How would you describe the relationships in your advisory? With students?

With your advisor?

- How would you describe the effect advisories have had on overall school relationships?
- What in your opinion is the importance or relevance of your advisory at this point in time in secondary learning?
- What is the best thing about your advisory?
- What needs to be improved in your advisory?
- What activities typically occur during your advisory period?
- What other things would you like for me to know about your time together?

A facilitative interview protocol (Appendix B) as suggested by Creswell (1998) was used to interview two focus groups at each of the three high schools. One focus group in each school was comprised of students and the other of faculty. The focus group interview presented the researcher with a set of interview dynamics as the participants interacted with and reacted to one another. Research in education may be particularly suited to group interview techniques. The experience of the individuals within a school takes place in a social context, thus it follows that discussion of experiences may best be facilitated within a setting, which allows people to “consider their own views in the context of the views of others” (Patton, 1990, p. 335). Krueger (1988) defined the focus group as “a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions of a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment” (p. 18). Ely et al. (1991) defined an interview as a purposeful conversation between two or more people that is directed by one person in order to “learn to see the world from the eyes of the person(s) being interviewed” (p. 58).

Field notes were written during and at the conclusion of each interview. Patton (1990) recommended that they include interpretations and insights and that each should be labeled as such.

### Access and Entry to the Site

Glesne (1999) wrote that "it helps to know an insider who is familiar with the individuals and the politics involved who can advise you in making access decisions" (p. 39). Being a principal of a large high school afforded the opportunity for familiarization with principals in similar sized schools. The principals agreed to provide the needed access to students and teachers for surveying and interviewing purposes. The principal designated a faculty member who would serve as contact and site coordinator for surveying purposes and for making the arrangements for the focus groups.

Glesne (1999) also suggested the use of a lay summary which is defined as "a written or verbal presentation of your research that you give to research participants to help explain who you are, what you are doing, and what role you would like them to play in your research" (p. 35). A lay summary (Appendix C) was provided to the advisees who took the survey and again to those who participated in the focus groups.

### Agreements with Participants

The primary purpose of the focused group interview is also the major advantage to the group interview--the collection of data within the social context. The participants in the group interview interact with and are influenced by one another. As a result of this interaction, the interview more closely resembles a natural, real-life situation and allows the dynamic nature of the interaction to be captured as a part of the data (Krueger, 1988).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) wrote, "meaningful human research is impossible without the full understanding and cooperation of the respondents" (p. 105). Using the lay summary, I fully informed the participants in the study. I used the Interviewee Consent Form in Appendix D. I also explained that the findings would be made public, but neither their names nor the names of the schools will be identified. Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained. The themes that emerged were verified with the respective school through a follow-up survey (Appendix E).

### Data Analysis

The qualitative data for this study included transcriptions of the 45-60-minute interviews, which were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim. In addition, field notes were kept throughout the entire research process and were analyzed along with other data. The 279 surveys were collected and scanned.

Data collection and data analysis are ongoing processes of interviewing and observing (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990). Pfaffenberger (1988) lists three steps in the analysis process: "rewriting, coding, and comparison" (p. 26). Other authors include the writing of field notes in the data collection process and begin data analysis with organization of data into single units of information, followed by coding, and comparison (Erlandson, 1993; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990). Breaking the data into single-idea units prepared the data for further analysis through coding.

Coding the data is a process of sorting the individual units into categories. The survey questions were also categorized as well as the written student responses to the open-ended questions. An inductive process was used to analyze all data from each

source. This involved examination of the individual bits of data to identify connections among the information. Words or phrases, which shared a common meaning, formed groups, which became categories.

The survey statements were categorized to identify categories to compare with categories identified from the focus groups. Graphs were made to provide a more complete picture of the phenomena. Appendices F, G, and H contain the verbatim comments of the survey respondents to the open-ended questions.

A second survey (Appendix E) was given to the respective schools for verification of the emerging themes. These were done six months after the initial survey. The last step in data analysis was the writing of the final report for the participating schools as well as an academic report for sharing the findings of the research with the professional field.

#### Trustworthiness of the Research

The issues of reliability, validity, and generalizability are considered by some to be limitations of qualitative research in general and the qualitative case study research more specifically. Merriam (1998) suggests these concepts be just as vital to qualitative research as they are to quantitative research if one is to trust the results of the research.

Internal validity is defined as the extent to which the findings match reality. Qualitative research assumes that reality is "holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing" (Merriam, 1988, p. 167). The accuracy depends on the accurate representation of the perceptions of the participants being studied. Stake (1995), cited in Creswell (1998), suggests triangulation of information in order to search for the convergence of information. Using interview transcripts and the survey data, 10 themes reflecting student perceptions of faculty-student advisement programs were identified. A follow-up survey

containing these themes was distributed to the schools for member checking (Creswell, 1998).

Reliability of the study (Merriam, 1998) was established through explanation of the assumptions and theory behind the study, triangulation, and creating an audit trail, which could be replicated by another researcher. The audit trail will include field notes, tape recordings, transcriptions, analytical coding schemes, and survey data generated in the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

#### Limitations

Lincoln and Guba (1985) warned that a case study may appear to be the whole picture of the phenomenon when it is actually only a piece of the picture. This study is not meant to generalize to other experiences. It is contextually bound in terms of time, place, and individuals participating in the process. It is intended to add to the understanding of this particular phenomenon.



## Chapter 4

### ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This study was designed to examine secondary school faculty-student advisory programs as perceived by the student participants of the programs. Case study methodology was used triangulating qualitative focus group interviews with students, qualitative focus group interviews with faculty, and quantitative survey data to determine the impact of the program at each site. The focus will be upon the characteristics most agreed upon by the participants. This chapter will include site descriptions for each of the three schools in this study. Following a description of context for each site, findings will be presented by major themes concerning the student perceptions of the faculty-student advisory programs existing in their respective secondary schools.

Subsequent to the descriptions of all three sites, a cross-site analysis of findings will be presented. A discussion of the results will follow with a comparison of the results of the findings of this study with previous advisement research.

Student perceptions of secondary school faculty-student advisory programs were collected for this study through the use of surveys, focus group interviews, and open-ended questions. A follow-up survey was given at each site for verification of the identified themes.

The initial survey was distributed to 100 students in each of three large high schools. Of the 300 surveys distributed, 92.67% were completed and returned. The survey consisted of 37 items and three open-ended statements. Students were able to respond to each of the 37 items by indicating strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly

disagree, or no opinion. The three open-ended statements asked for strengths and weaknesses of the program with an opportunity to write additional comments.

The follow-up survey was distributed to 100 students in each of the same three large high schools. A total of 295 surveys were completed and returned. The survey consisted of 10 items. Students were able to respond to each of the 10 items by indicating strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, or no opinion.

Following the case study reports, a discussion of the three advisory groups is provided. This will be the basis for the conclusions reached related to the research question.

### Site A

#### Description of High School Site A

Site A high school had an enrollment of 1,200+ in grades 10–12 for the 2001–2002 school year. The locale was a suburban setting. Standardized tests (Iowa Tests of Educational Development) were one way that the district monitored student achievement improvement goals. The 2001–2002 data indicated improvement was continuing. One important indicator from the standardized test data was the percentage of students who were proficient. The proficiency level for the Iowa Tests of Educational Development was defined as the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile. The 11<sup>th</sup> grade report indicated students were 78.2% proficient in reading, 92.1% proficient in math, and 91.6% proficient in science.

Thirteen students (.5%), grades 7–12, dropped out during the 2001–2002 school year while 92.6% of the graduation class of 2002 planned to attend postsecondary institutions.

Long-term district goals follow:

Goal 1: Students will apply reading strategies in all curricular areas to improve comprehension.

Goal 2: Students will apply problem-solving strategies in all curricular areas to improve their ability to explain answers, draw conclusions, and apply gained knowledge.

Goal 3: Programs, structures, and other resources (federal, state, and local) will be integrated into the system to provide a foundation to support increased student achievement.

#### History of Advisement Development in High School Site A

Advisement began at Site A in the fall of 1998. Every certified staff member including the nurse had an advisement. Every secretary and associate was assigned to a group as well. The classified staff was paired with administrators so that in the absence of the latter the group still had an adviser present. The part-time teachers were paired with full-time teachers. All students including special education students were randomly assigned to groups. Students requiring one-on-one associates attended with their associate. Ideally there were six sophomores, six juniors, and six seniors. However, move-ins and dropouts caused that ratio to fluctuate. Students remained with the same adviser throughout their high school career. Advisement met each Tuesday for approximately 25 minutes.

Faculty members provided a background for the development of the advisement program. Two teachers coordinated the program. Every week they published an agenda to be covered in advisement the next Tuesday. On Thursdays they held a preparatory

session before and after school. Approximately 60% of the faculty participated on a regular basis. Sessions required approximately five minutes for the coordinators to provide an understanding of the activity for the next Tuesday. This was done in an attempt to minimize the preparation time of the adviser. The document outlined exactly what to do and was easy to follow. For those who chose not to attend, an agenda was placed in their mailboxes. The coordinators tried to give ownership to everyone, students and faculty alike, in terms of determining the agenda. A steering committee composed of faculty members wrote a new calendar for each year. The calendar announced the topic; the particulars were developed later. While advisement was not meant to be an extra prep, some teachers consider it to be. "I consider it an extra prep. It's not my favorite thing to do. But I don't hate it. And I think that our coordinators have made this a workable program. I think the prep sessions are great."

When advisement first began, the students viewed it as an elementary or middle school activity. The seniors were upset because they had open campus and felt that it was another way the school was forcing them to be on campus. They would prefer it was an optional activity.

Educational Focus of Advisement Program  
Activities of High School Site A

Table 1 is composed of items from the survey that identify the educational focus. The percentage is the sum of the strongly agree and agree responses. Subsequent to the table is a discussion of the results including corresponding focus group commentary.

Table 1

## Future Planning and Academic Progress – High School Site A

Survey Item	Percent Agreement % Strongly Agree + Agree
7. My advisor has been very helpful with my curriculum planning and selection of classes.	64%
8. My advisor has assisted me with my program plan, course selections and registration.	72%
9. My advisor has helped me to clear up questions about my three (four)--year plan of study at my high school.	73%
10. My study habits and techniques have improved during the past year as a result of my involvement with my advisory group.	18%
11. My study habits and techniques have improved through activities in the advisory group.	19%
20. My advisor knew about my progress in other classes.	42%
21. I know that my advisor has been in contact with other teachers related to my progress in class.	22%
26. I assume responsibility for my academic progress.	96%
28. Our advisory is preparing students to deal with issues and problems they will face in the future.	43%

Table 1 (continued)

## Future Planning and Academic Progress – High School Site A

Survey Item	Percent Agreement <u>% Strongly Agree + Agree</u>
29. Advisors offer the help I need in program planning.	57%
30. Advisors offer me the help I need in the selection of a vocation.	46%

One focus of advisement at Site A was scheduling and career planning. During the second semester a time was set aside to prepare students for an individual conferencing session they would have with their parents/guardians and their advisor. There were eight or nine sessions of 30 minutes each set at the beginning of the school day designated for individual preparation with the advisor. The initial perception of many of the staff members and many of the students was negative. That changed following the conferences. One advisor reported, "I would say 75% at least after those one-on-one conferences felt good about them. We learned more about the kids. The kids were like—it wasn't a big deal, it didn't hurt us, and I kind of enjoyed it, in fact."

The conferencing has helped the students realize that they needed to plan ahead for their course selections. The students surveyed agreed that advisors were very helpful with curriculum planning and course selection (64%), with their program plan, course selections, and registration (72%), and with preparing their plan of study in high school (73%). The students did not agree that the advisors were helpful with vocational selections. Only 46% perceived that they received the help they needed. Additionally, the



students have learned to open up to their parents as they discuss their future plans. The one-on-one conferencing provided that opportunity.

Scheduling was the immediate reply of the student focus group participants in response to the query, "What is the purpose of advisement?" One teacher shared,

I think we do help the counselors out an awful lot. And I'm not necessarily talking about their personal problems that the counselors shut the door to talk to them about, but I think we do an awful lot of paperwork for the counselors--with the classes and the scheduling.

Advisors always review the students' academic grade reports, looking for ways to improve as well as giving them pats on the back for the things they have done well. However, fewer than half (42%) the students felt their advisor knew about their progress in other classes and only 22% believed that their advisor contacted other teachers regarding their academic progress.

The faculty emphasized a second focus of advisement was socialization activities to create a climate conducive for all students. The coordinators used source books for many activities. They have made kites and have done chalk drawings. In addition they sought help from other educators. The physical education department assisted with homecoming activities. The Students Against Destructive Decisions provided two different activities throughout the school year. The guidance department helped write curriculum. The Ecology Club has helped coordinate Earth Day activities.

Faculty indicated that the students perceived that they did a lot of surveys. One participant said,

I think the thing I'd change is the busy work. Some things get dumped in advisement for us to do. I'm not placing blame anywhere but the kids seem to fill out a lot of forms and questionnaires, and they don't necessarily like it and I don't like that either.

Some past student surveys were useful for providing comments that were used to improve advisement. Surveys suggested more activities. Competitions and activities between groups of advisements were popular ideas. One student said,

On advisory choice days, there's four groups that have had kind of an impromptu Advisory Olympics. We've done things like pie-eating contests, Name That Tune, and the Kevin Bacon Game. So we keep track of the points. That not only gets communication among your group and you get to see some other kids. It's good relationship building.

There are times that students needed to use advisement as an outlet for issues within the school. For example, on September 11 students needed to talk. The agenda was lenient enough that groups could do other things, whatever advisers felt their students needed at the time. There were other days that they must follow the agenda. Many advisors used the agenda as a guide or safety net.

Students most favorable to the advisory concept agreed that conversation about current issues was more valuable than most of the planned activities. "It's just cool to sit down and talk to someone about whatever you want." Others felt comfortable discussing scheduling, but avoided topics of a more personal nature.

Relationships Between Students and Faculty  
Advisor at High School Site A

Table 2 is composed of items from the survey that identify the relationship focus. The percentage is the sum of the strongly agree and agree responses. Subsequent to the table is a discussion of the results including corresponding focus group commentary.

Table 2

Relationships – High School Site A

Survey Item	Percent Agreement
	<u>% Strongly Agree + Agree</u>
1. I can talk easily to my advisor.	78%
2. My adviser and I have had an opportunity to get acquainted during this year.	65%
3. My adviser is available to talk to me.	65%
6. The members of my advisory group share concerns and interests with one another.	51%
27. My adviser cares about my academic progress.	64%

“I think if teachers didn’t act like teachers, it would work out better. If they acted like it wasn’t a class that they are just people.” Students especially appreciated the teachers who talked about their lives outside of school, their families, and their other activities. Advisement afforded the opportunity to get acquainted with their advisor for 65% of those surveyed and 65% found their advisor available to talk. Students surveyed

(78%) responded that they could easily talk with their advisor and 64% felt their advisor cared about their academic progress.

There were a lot of team building activities during the first semester. It took time to create a sense of trust within the group. Sophomores joined a group that had been together for two years. It sometimes took all year to get the sophomores fully integrated to the point "They can say whatever they want and they aren't going to be criticized." Students reported that "it gives them a chance to meet older classmen who inform them of what high school life is all about, what kind of classes you need to take, and to meet some of the teachers." One faculty member remarked,

Advisement forced students to interact with students they may never have known.

I have students that are involved with music, athletics, and work. They get the chance to hear the highs and lows of each other as far as what they look forward to in a day, what they do on weekends, and what are the top concerns for them.

In a large school students tend to group with those of similar interests. This was their opportunity to intermingle. The size of the group gave each member an important role in the group unlike their role in a larger classroom setting. It was a "bonding time." "It's a good way to meet people. I really have none of my friends in advisory but now I consider some of these people my friends. I've gotten to know them." In response to the survey statement of sharing concerns and interests with one another only 51% agreed.

Conversely, some students believed it would be more constructive and more comfortable if you could select your own group. The principal differed and was adamant that students be randomly assigned rather than given a choice of advisement. "What if the kid got their third or fourth choice? They would feel that the system was unfair."

Advisors suggested the arrangement of the chairs in a circle facilitated the conversation in each group by positioning students and staff face-to-face. One faculty member shared the following:

I think if you change the layout of the classroom and make it non-traditional, then the kids intermingle a lot better. If you leave it in alleys and rows, they are going to sit just first by who you know and then segregate by grade, by sex, and they are not going to talk as much. If you can live with moving it all out, sitting them on the floor, putting them in a circle, I think they communicate a lot better than before.

Many identified food as the equalizer. The treats served as an icebreaker. As they ate their treats, students were talking and intermingling. An adviser shared, "I'd say the number one thing you'll find out with the students is they like advisement because of the treats." Students in the focus group overwhelmingly agreed.

From the faculty perspective,

I think what it does do is give every student an advocate that they can come talk to whether they choose that person or not. Every student knows one adult and knows that they can talk to one adult and I think if you can save one student, it's worth it.

From the student perspective, "I think it's a pretty good program. I feel like I could talk to my advisor and he wouldn't say anything."

Another teacher said,

I think what helped me with my sophomores was having one-on-one conferences with our advisories. I think what helped me to get to know them and for them to

feel a sense of belonging to our group and to talk to me during advisement was the conversation I had one-on-one with them.

Advisers met one-on-one for 30 minutes each semester. Another remarked,

It just seems like so many middle-of-the-road kids can fall through the cracks.

Just having the one-on-ones with students, just finding out there's issues that need to be addressed, getting guidance counselor help, and it's one person that needs help.

One advisor took her advisees one at a time out for lunch during the semester for additional personalized time. Another said,

I don't know if I want more time with them. It's hard to see people once a week. I feel kind of torn. If I want to build relationships and make them feel like it's an important part of their experience here, I feel like we should see them a little more. Some of the kids I don't see except for that one time a week."

Another advisor commented, "I think it depends on the curriculum area that the advisor comes from and the experiences they've had with their advisory, and their comfort level in talking to high school kids in a non-curricular way." A student agreed,

I have close relationships with other teachers in the school rather than my advisor but my advisor is supposed to be the one teacher that is supposed to be closer than all the other teachers. But I don't think they accomplish that unless they are the right type of teacher.

Another student added,

I think that people that have the relationship with the kids already think it is a waste of time. What I mean by that would be music people, some coaches, maybe

with speech, drama, those areas, they already have a great relationship with kids and so they don't see the need in this as much as some of the others.

A faculty member advised,

It all depends on the teacher and how they run their group. Like some of them will fight it, but I tell them you can fight it, but it's not going to go away. And if you are fighting it because you dislike it because it's another prep, that attitude goes to the advisees. So if you want to improve, always have a positive attitude and think that every activity, whether or not you like it, that we're going to try to make it good. And then it will be better.

#### Sense of Belonging at High School Site A

Table 3 is composed of items from the survey that identify the student sense of belonging. The percentage is the sum of the strongly agree and agree responses.

Subsequent to the table is a discussion of the results including corresponding focus group commentary.

Table 3

#### Sense of Belonging - High School Site A

Survey Item	Percent Agreement
	% Strongly Agree + Agree
4. My advisor has helped me feel that I belong at my school.	50%
5. I look forward to meeting with my advisory group.	48%
15. I understand the school activity code.	39%



The climate of Site A High School was really good according to students and staff. Students considered advisement as a vehicle that built their self-confidence not just in the small group setting but also in the larger school environment. A student shared, "In the beginning the relationship wasn't there and through that relationship it helped you feel like you could walk into other places you don't know." However, when asked directly if advisement had an important influence on building relationships throughout the school, students gave a resounding, "No." The survey revealed that 50% of the students agreed that advisors helped them feel that they belonged at school. While 49% of the students surveyed responded that they looked forward to going to their advisory group, only 43% looked forward to going to school each day. Only 30% felt that advisement improved their attitude toward school while 75 % agreed that their advisor encouraged proper behavior and a positive attitude. The students were polite to one another and there have been no major discipline problems. There had been little overt aggression or criticism between students.

A faculty member remarked, "The perception from the parents' standpoint is that it's not an institution, that they have someone they know. They feel a little more secure because there's someone who is going to be an advocate for their son or daughter." However, within each group existed a different climate dependent upon who the advisor was and who the students were. The dynamics might change from year to year as new sophomores enter and seniors graduate. By the time they were seniors, they were ready to move on. They would prefer it be optional or to meet less often. Student opinion varied from weekly to monthly meeting recommendations. A faculty member summarized the adult perception,

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A large percentage of students would say they didn't see the importance, I think, and then maybe you'd have students who say, wait a second, I like it and it helps our school be better. We treat each other better, and they remind the negative thinkers about all the positives.

#### Communication at High School Site A

Table 4 is composed of items from the survey that identify the communication focus. The percentage is the sum of the strongly agree and agree responses. Subsequent to the table is a discussion of the results including corresponding focus group commentary.

Table 4

#### Communication – High School Site A

Survey Item	Percent Agreement
	% Strongly Agree + Agree
12. I have been aware of what is happening throughout the school because of topics presented during the advisory period.	61%
13. School information is discussed on a regular basis during our advisory.	73%
14. My advisor kept me well informed of important school events and activities.	74%

One of the benefits of advisement was communication not only within the advisement but also within the entire school. Survey results showed that the advisor kept

them well informed of school events (74%) and did so regularly (73%). At Site A each advisement voted for a representative who met three or four times during the semester to discuss issues of their choice with the principal. That resulted in changes with parking and changes with the hot lunch line. There were 77 representatives, one from each advisement. They met in groups of approximately 25. One student reported, "I think it's a good way to get your word into the school just so you can speak out, take things to the principals and kind of tell them what students are thinking." Another shared, "We know lots of things aren't going to get changed, no matter how hard we try." Students felt that smaller issues (chocolate milk) were addressed but bigger issues (tardy policy) were not.

A faculty member summarized the communication perspective,

Communication within the group was a combination of academic and social.

I think having one person to sit down with them and help them plan what they are going to take, give them quasi expert information about potential classes as well as being able to talk about their own personal situation or issues that they are dealing with. Even in their large group, that's one of the great things about it.

## Site B

### Description of High School Site B

Site B high school had an enrollment of 2,200+ in grades 9–12 for the 2001 – 2002 school year. The locale was an urban setting. Standardized tests were one way that the district monitored student achievement improvement goals. The 2001-2002 data indicated that improvement was continuing. One important indicator from the standardized test data was that the percentage of students who were proficient was

increasing. The proficiency level for the Iowa Tests of Educational Development was defined as the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile. The 11<sup>th</sup> grade report indicated students were 77.3% proficient in math and 77.7% proficient in reading. The science scores were not reported.

During the 2001-2002 school year 336 students, grades 9-12 left Site B High School. Of that group 291 were placed in the Alternative School. Approximately 87% of the graduation class of 2002 planned to attend postsecondary institutions.

Long-range goals follow:

1. By June 2003, 75% of all students will read on grade level.
2. Reduce by one-half the academic achievement gap between minority and poor students and others in the district by June 2003.
3. Reduce the number of suspensions.

#### History of Advisement Development in High School Site B

The advisory program at Site B began in the fall of 1999. Students were assigned alphabetically. All certified staff and some volunteer support staff participated. There were students from every grade classification in each group. Special education students were mainstreamed. Students were to remain with the same advisor throughout their high school experience. Advisories met each Tuesday for 19 minutes. Attendance was not mandatory.

Faculty members provided a background for the development of the advisement program. All agreed that relationship building was the primary purpose for the advisory program, which was designed to give each student a person that they would have for four years that went beyond the regular classroom connections. However, the staff identified many barriers: no mandatory attendance, ineffective activities, unsatisfactory meeting

environments, and lack of commitment of both faculty and students. One advisor reported the results of an informal survey he gave his students in the spring of 2002:

Many of the students do not think it is worthwhile. They don't see any functional essence—meaning we are in a capitalist society, and we teach our kids to expect something from something or they should receive something for showing up, so to speak, and we do that in schools. So they'd like to see possible credit or some reason for them to be there. As we sit in our group, we see many kids who aren't even in their perspective places. So I have 8–10 students who come continuously. I should have 14 students. I've never seen the others more than once or twice.

One parent questioned if school was being dismissed at the time of the advisory group meetings. The parent reported seeing “people pouring out of the building onto the street.” Another advisor who had the same attendance issues encouraged the students who were not attending to find an advisory they liked or someone they wanted to be with even if it was not his/her assigned group. “The group I've got now is a group that wants to come and pretty much shows up every week.”

The advisory activities were scheduled by the semester with occasional revision throughout the semester. They would have a five to six week plan to “conquer and discuss.” Several students suggested grouping by grade level to encourage the discussion of pertinent topics.

While attendance and activities were both issues, one advisor pointed to the environment as not conducive to advisory,

I'm in the cafeteria along with 5 or 6 other advocacy groups. It's a tough place to talk to kids. They segregate themselves. It feels like study hall; they treat it like

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study hall. They go to the vending machines. It's a struggle to have a conversation when you have all those people in the cafeteria. I know where all the kids are going, and they are coming to the cafeteria.

A student offered, "Everybody doesn't sit down. They do know what it is for.

Why do it if they don't need it or something, or it is not required? So why am I showing up?" The freshmen at first believed it was required and did attend until they witnessed the lack of attendance of the upper classmen.

#### Educational Focus of Advisement Program Activities of High School Site B

Table 5 is composed of items from the survey that identify the educational focus of advisement. The percentage is the sum of the strongly agree and agree responses. Subsequent to the table is a discussion of the results including corresponding focus group commentary.

Table 5

#### Future Planning and Academic Progress – High School Site B

<u>Survey Item</u>	<u>Percent Agreement</u> <u>% Strongly Agree + Agree</u>
7. My advisor has been very helpful with my curriculum planning and selection of classes.	41%
8. My advisor has assisted me with my program plan, course selections and registration.	35%

Table 5 (continued)

## Future Planning and Academic Progress – High School Site B

Survey Item	Percent Agreement <u>% Strongly Agree + Agree</u>
9. My advisor has helped me to clear up questions about my three (four)--year plan of study at my high school.	46%
10. My study habits and techniques have improved during the past year as a result of my involvement with my advisory group.	27%
11. My study habits and techniques have improved through activities in the advisory group.	31%
20. My advisor knew about my progress in other classes.	29%
21. I know that my advisor has been in contact with other teachers related to my progress in class.	27%
26. I assume responsibility for my academic progress.	79%
28. Our advisory is preparing students to deal with issues and problems they will face in the future.	54%
29. Advisors offer the help I need in program planning.	40%
30. Advisors offer me the help I need in the selection of a vocation.	36%

Future planning and academic progress were not a part of the focus for advisement groups at Site B. A high percentage (79%) of students responded on the survey that each assumed responsibility for his/her academic progress. Although only 29% of the students responding indicated the advisor knew about his/her academic progress, 61% reported that their advisor cared about their academic progress. Less than half (41%) acknowledged that his/her advisor had been helpful with curriculum planning and course selection. Fewer (36%) identified the advisor as one who offered help in the selection of a vocation.

Some advisors were teachers; some were support staff. Any volunteer from the support staff had a group including office staff and custodial staff. One secretary shared,

There are issues that are coming up that I don't feel I'm qualified to talk about like teen pregnancy. I haven't been educated in that. There's a fine line with dealing with students that I don't have the knowledge that teachers have. So that bothers me. I just feel like I don't want to tell them the wrong thing.

Another group liked the idea of advocacy but the group did not enjoy the activities. One teacher asked the students if they thought the school should continue with the advocacy program. They replied in the affirmative, but said they'd like to see it modified. They felt it was middle school activities or something younger kids should be doing. "They want something a little more jazzed up but they like the program."

A second teacher reported an opposite view, "Hands-on activities even though they say it is middle schoolish, I think they like that a lot better than more adult activities where you have to sit and think about what you have to do." Students in the focus group agreed that they enjoyed hands-on activities, but effectively refused to do academic



portfolios during the 2000–2001 school year. One student said, “I don’t have the time for this away from school. I don’t want to buy my own materials for this, but if you guys want to provide it for us free, then okay.”

Another teacher shared that his/her students liked advocacy because they did not do the activities. She said,

I don’t necessarily follow the agenda they put out every week. I’m glad to have that, you know, because there are good ideas at times when we need it. A lot of things, particularly this last year since September 11<sup>th</sup> came up, have changed the discussion in advocacy quite a lot.

Another adult continued,

Kids want to go into this thinking there is a purpose. I think the team building activities we do, the unity week, the posters, when we got together for homecoming week, when there’s a reason for the kids to rally behind a cause, so to speak, I think they really do come around and enjoy that. And I do like to see the team building. Then you do see the kids interact. And when you do the surveys and those kinds of things, I think that defeats the purpose of advocacy because the kids aren’t getting to know the kids and how they interact.

#### Relationships Between Students and Faculty Advisor at High School Site B

Table 6 is composed of items from the survey that identify the relationship focus of advisement. The percentage is the sum of the strongly agree and agree responses. Subsequent to the table is a discussion of the results including corresponding focus group commentary.

Table 6

## Relationships – High School Site B

Survey Item	Percent Agreement
	% Strongly Agree + Agree
1. I can talk easily to my advisor.	95%
2. My advisor and I have had an opportunity to get acquainted during this year.	71%
3. My advisor is available to talk to me.	83%
6. The members of my advisory group share concerns and with one another.	53%
27. My advisor cares about my academic progress.	61%

Relationship building was purported by faculty to be the focus of the advisement groups. However, observation of one advisory group revealed the students did not know one another. While they acknowledged the benefit of mixing grade levels, there had been little effort within the groups to develop relationships between the different class groups. “Usually there’s a constructive thing that the teachers have like a question they are able to talk about. We discuss it, or attempt to, for 20 minutes once a week.” There was more interest in discussing “stuff that is going on in our own world, or what we’re going to do. Not just during our high school years, but probably after high school.”

Students (95%) responded that they could easily talk with their advisor. The advisor was available for 83% of the students. Peer relationships (sharing concerns and interests with one another) scored 53%. When asked about those relationships one teen

replied, "There aren't any. There are only three people that show up most of the time. There is no relationship. Out of those three people, I know one of them." Playing games served as an icebreaker for some groups. "I've noticed some big differences since then," said one student. Food, everyone agreed, provided interaction for the groups.

Another student cited a benefit of the diversity of grade levels and the opportunities for mentoring:

I like having different grade levels because they wouldn't know anybody else. I think if you have a strong upper class, it benefits a lot of the lower classmen. It helps them a lot just to get them comfortable with the school in the beginning of the year. How should I \_\_\_? When should I \_\_\_? They asked that in advocacy and the older ones could tell them.

The faculty adviser played a very important role in the perception students had of the advisory. One student reported,

In the beginning of the year, the teacher was really excited. She had all these things she wanted to do. And slowly, as she progressed, she just handed out a worksheet. Once we did that we might talk about it for like five minutes. It's over and go on with your day.

A critical point was made by one of the faculty planners of the Site B advisory programs,

I think one of the reasons we don't have a lot of student buy in is because we don't have staff buy in. I think that the staff felt this was forced upon them. There was not an opportunity for them to question the validity of advocacy. I do see a lot of worth in this.

Another responded,

Because of the attendance issue and because of the situation and the conditions of where the advocate classes meet, there is some resentment as to why do we have to do this. There are many faculty members that don't feel comfortable in a situation like this. We often time don't know what we are supposed to do. Some of us can wing it, but I agree, those who are resentful of the whole program, in general, go in with a bad attitude and then they just sit there. Essentially there were staff members undermining the program.

Currently the faculty had not had the opportunity to provide input to improve the program. Some felt "it's just one more thing they have to prepare for." But it was not supposed to be a classroom. "I truly believe that if you are going to have it, you need to have it in a welcoming atmosphere."

One of the office staff shared, "I love my kids. I love going. I love being with them. But I've had problems with it. There are way too many kids." Others were coming to join her group. This created resentment from her assigned group toward those viewed as intruders.

A parent who works as a support staff member felt that advisory had been very beneficial.

It's given me an opportunity to meet some students that I would not have met otherwise. They became comfortable in approaching me for help outside of advisory. I think they kind of understand what it is supposed to be about, but I don't think they've made that connection on a personal level yet.

Another faculty advisor used candy as an incentive to attend. This advisor made a point of talking with each student individually during the advisory time. Students learned that they could go to that adult at any time if they needed something. "To me, that is what advocacy is." That adult tracked down the non-attendees and "brought them back into the fold." "The best thing is the connection with the kids and the worst thing is the attendance."

### Sense of Belonging at High School Site B

Table 7 is composed of items from the survey that identify the sense of belonging focus of advisement. The percentage is the sum of the strongly agree and agree responses. Subsequent to the table is a discussion of the results including corresponding focus group commentary.

Table 7

### Sense of Belonging – High School Site B

Survey Item	Percent Agreement
	% Strongly Agree + Agree
4. My advisor has helped me feel that I belong at my school.	54%
5. I look forward to meeting with my advisory group.	61%
15. I understand the school activity code.	61%
16. My advisor periodically refers to the respect code and other behavior guidelines.	54%
17. I like school.	47%

Table 7 (continued)

## Sense of Belonging – High School Site B

Survey Item	Percent Agreement
	% Strongly Agree + Agree
18. I feel the advisory has helped me improve my attitude toward school.	45%
19. My advisor has encouraged proper behavior and positive attitude.	68%
22. My advisory group regularly receives and generates input into our student council.	34%
23. The advisory system involved all students in student government.	31%
24. My advisor has encouraged my active participation in school activities and community involvement.	55%
25. I am involved in school activities (i.e. music, sports, clubs, intramurals, etc.).	70%
31. The advisory group helps to improve school spirit.	51%
32. I look forward to going to school each day.	48%
33. I look forward to going to my advisory group.	67%

Students (54%) agreed that their advisors helped them feel that they belonged at school and 68% of the advisors encouraged proper behavior and a positive attitude. Only 47% of the students agreed that they liked school with 48% looking forward to going to

school each day. At the same time 67% looked forward to meeting with their advisory group. The difference of 19% indicates that students have developed more of a sense of belonging to their small advisory group than to the large high school.

Student participation is encouraged by 55% of the advisors resulting in 70% student participation rate. The students were polite to one another and there have been no major discipline problems.

#### Communication at High School Site B

Table 8 is composed of items from the survey that identify the communication focus of advisement. The percentage is the sum of the strongly agree and agree responses. Subsequent to the table is a discussion of the results including corresponding focus group commentary.

Table 8

#### Communication – High School Site B

Survey Item	Percent Agreement
	<u>% Strongly Agree + Agree</u>
12. I have been aware of what is happening throughout the school because of topics presented during the advisory period.	62%
13. School information is discussed on a regular basis during our advisory.	67%
14. My advisor kept me well informed of important school events and activities.	71%

Student survey results identified communication as a strong benefit of the advisement. School information was reported to be a regular topic by 67% of the students. The advisor (71%) kept the advisees well informed of important school events and activities. While not identified as one of the main purposes of advisory groups at Site B, the communication responses were overall higher than other areas surveyed. In a large high school, this has become one of the main benefits and one of the main driving forces for attending the advisory groups.

### Site C

#### Description of High School Site C

Site C high school had an enrollment of 1,300+ in grades 9-12 for the 2001-2002 school year. The locale was a small city setting. Standardized tests (Iowa Tests of Educational Development) were one way that the district monitored student achievement improvement goals. The 2001-2002 test data indicated that improvement was continuing. One important indicator from the standardized test data was that the percentage of students who were proficient increased as students got older. The proficiency level for the Iowa Tests of Educational Development was defined as the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile. The 11<sup>th</sup> grade report indicated students were 77.4% proficient in math, 82.4% proficient in reading, and 81.3% proficient in science.

Fifty-seven students, grades 9-12, left Site C High School during the 2001-2002 school year. Thirty-one of these 57 were placed in the Alternative School where they completed the year. Approximately 84% of Site C graduates plan to attend post-secondary institutions.



Long-range student goals were to raise the achievement level in reading, mathematics, and science of targeted sub-groups of students as demonstrated on district-wide measures, and to increase the number of developmental assets students possess by nurturing a safe and positive environment. For the 2002-2003 school year the latter goal read, "To nurture a safe and positive environment by reducing the number of incidents that 11<sup>th</sup> graders indicate they were teased or bullied."

#### History of Advisement Development in High School Site C

The advisory program at Site C began in the fall of 1998 with the entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade class. As each new year began, an additional class was added until full inclusion was reached in the fall of 2001. Advisory groups met for 25 minutes following the weekly all staff faculty meetings on Tuesday. Students were randomly assigned to the advisory groups. The special education students were mixed in with the general population except the Level Three students that had been assigned to the roster teachers. All certified staff participated. There were students from every grade classification in each group. Students remained with the same advisor throughout their high school experience.

#### Educational Focus of Advisement Program Activities of High School Site C

Table 9 is composed of items from the survey that identify the educational focus of advisement. The percentage is the sum of the strongly agree and agree responses. Subsequent to the table is a discussion of the results including corresponding focus group commentary.

Table 9

## Future Planning and Academic Progress – High School Site C

Survey Item	Percent Agreement <u>% Strongly Agree + Agree</u>
7. My advisor has been very helpful with my curriculum planning and selection of classes.	56%
8. My advisor has assisted me with my program plan, course selections and registration.	66%
9. My advisor has helped me to clear up questions about my three (four)--year plan of study at my high school.	57%
10. My study habits and techniques have improved during the past year as a result of my involvement with my advisory group.	19%
11. My study habits and techniques have improved through activities in the advisory group.	22%
20. My advisor knew about my progress in other classes.	45%
21. I know that my advisor has been in contact with other teachers related to my progress in class.	27%
26. I assume responsibility for my academic progress.	90%

Table 9 (continued)

## Future Planning and Academic Progress – High School Site C

Survey Item	Percent Agreement <u>% Strongly Agree + Agree</u>
28. Our advisory is preparing students to deal with issues and problems they will face in the future.	35%
29. Advisors offer the help I need in program planning.	45%
30. Advisors offer me the help I need in the selection of a vocation.	35%

From the perspective of a student:

I think originally advisement was implemented to help students reflect on how they are doing in high school and hopefully encourage them to do better throughout the year. They can look back at how they have done because they've got it in a folder or a box--something documented so they are more motivated the next year. I think maybe it's changing to more of a place to talk, to feel comfortable around other people, more for changing the atmosphere of the school.

I think it still helps you see how you have done, but I think it's changing more to the environment, changing the environment.

Each year the students were required to collect at least three artifacts. Two were from school and one was from outside. The artifacts addressed the six district learning goals. A rulebook detailed the sub goals within each goal. Students ranked themselves

4-3-2-1 based on each sub goal and self-assessed in their reflection. The latter addressed what they would do differently next time and what they liked about their work. For special education students, advisors made accommodations by using fill-in-the-blank reflections. Over the four years, they accumulated 12 artifacts and demonstrated growth in at least two of the district learning goals. Most students kept their artifacts and reflections in boxes, folders, or binders, which remained with their advisor. While many students were allowed to take them home to work on, others reported writing only during their advisory time.

Completion of reflections was tied to class status. For example, the completion of 3 reflections allowed the student the perquisites of a sophomore, 6 provided the perquisites of a junior, 9 earned the perquisites of a senior and 12 were required for graduation. The Senior Celebration each May demonstrated their growth as a person, what they had learned over the years, how they had grown in all the different areas, and how they had enhanced their skills. The graduating class of 2002 was the first one to hold the Senior Celebrations where they presented their portfolios. They invited their parents, friends, and people from the community or teachers who had made an impression upon them. One student reported,

It's kind of exciting for me to see how I've grown, to see my freshman year and look back and think, oh my goodness, I did that. And then see where I've come now. And then it makes me excited for college because I feel like our high school has done a good job preparing us for college.

Another responded,

I also feel that it's really prepared us for college really well, and it's really interesting to look back at things that you did, like your freshman year, that you normally would've forgotten about. But you had it in your portfolio and you can look back on them, to see what you wrote about them. Not only the artifacts have improved but also the reflections you wrote about them have improved. It's really helped to see how much you've grown when you are kind of down and like, yeah, it's been a waste of time. Then you see that it's actually been worthwhile even if you don't realize it.

Some students question the attendance requirement once their artifacts and reflections are completed. They reported feeling like they should be doing something else because they have completed the work for their class. They do not want to have an extra class. A student reflected,

Yeah, once you get to your senior year, it is a lot of repetition. Yet again, it is only in its fourth year so they are still kind of working out the stuff. I think they should incorporate more stuff than just the reflections and the learning goals into it, and it would seem more worthwhile of our time.

Faculty advisors focused upon the growing acceptance of advisory groups but acknowledged the additional time required to monitor the portfolios.

Working on artifacts for the portfolios was not the only activity of their advisory program. There were other school issues that they felt the need to talk about. A student commented,

We talk about what's going on in school and different things you are doing in classes. One time in advisory, we have a longer time and we watched a video on harassment and learned all about how to deal with that. It's a time when the whole school can do it at the same time.

Teachers varied in their approach to the activities in the advisory groups. Some teachers worked on the artifacts and got them completed at the beginning of the year. Other teachers worked throughout the year. Some of them discussed different issues at school, leaving the artifacts near the end of class. If students needed help with them, some advisors worked with the student one-on-one. Sometimes advisors circulated, trying to contact each person asking how the reflections were progressing.

Students (90%) indicated they assumed responsibility for their academic progress. Site C advisory groups focused upon the completion of the artifacts more than on future planning. Students (56%) reported that the advisor assisted with course selection and program planning with only 57% responding that the advisor helped them with their plan of study while in high school.

Some of the advisory groups went for pizza as a group. Others have challenged another to whiffel ball. In the spring all advisory groups reported to the field house for a huge assembly. Each advisory had to send one person down from their group to participate in some funny activity. "It was fun and you would kind of get in with your group and see who's the best Frisbee golfer or whatever. You kind of learned more about your group." The winning advisory got a free day from school to clean for Earth Day.

In the fall they had "Freshman Crazy Night." Students, accompanied by their parents, came for a school tour and then met with their advisory group. They had the

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opportunity to ask questions and to learn about their new school. During homecoming the advisories made masks and at Christmas they made ornaments. Some activities were included in a notebook for advisory time. One faculty member felt that students viewed them as "junior high-ish". He continued,

So we've just gone with being real laid back and just talk about what's going on.

The big event we had, too, was September 11. That was another teachable moment right there and boom, there we are, in a situation, in a small-class atmosphere and we get a good discussion on before the day really started. That was a huge benefit we never could've predicted.

A student summarized, "I think the majority of the school agrees with it and would go with it because it really helps you look at how you've grown and what you've done in school and not just be here to do it and get it over with."

#### Relationships Between Students and Faculty Advisor at School Site C

Table 10 is composed of items from the survey that identify the relationship focus of advisement. The percentage is the sum of the strongly agree and agree responses. Subsequent to the table is a discussion of the results including corresponding focus group commentary.

Table 10

#### Relationships – High School Site C

Survey Item	Percent Agreement
	% Strongly Agree + Agree
1. I can talk easily to my advisor.	93%

Table 10 (continued)

Relationships – High School Site C

Survey Item	Percent Agreement
	% Strongly Agree + Agree
2. My advisor and I have had an opportunity to get acquainted during this year.	84%
3. My advisor is available to talk to me.	91%
6. The members of my advisory group share concerns and interests with one another.	51%
27. My advisor cares about my academic progress.	84%

The primary stated focus for the development of the faculty-student advisory at Site C was to provide an opportunity for students to effectively gather artifacts showing evidence of growth in each of the six learning goals of the district and to reflect upon their growth. As a by-product, relationships developed between peers and between the students and the faculty advisor. Talking easily with his/her advisor was rated 93% with 91% finding ready availability of their advisor. However, only 51% believed that the group shared concerns and interests. Focus groups indicated that this might be conservatively low.

An upper classman shared her perspective:

I think we've gained a lot of close friendships and it's true you can really help out the underclassmen and kind of introduce them to different things. And tell them,



"Oh, don't do this; do that." There are things that you learn from the experience of being here. You can help them out with that.

A younger student provided a similar view:

I think it has been great to get together with the older kids to see what they are doing, because you don't normally get together with the older kids unless you are with them in classes. But it's a good way to talk to the older kids to see what's going on and to see what works.

One faculty member told of her son who is in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade:

He was so proud of himself because he was helping a ninth grader. He was kind of modeling. He was really proud of that. I don't think he ever would've had an opportunity to help another kid if there wasn't this kind of a set up. It gives them almost a mentoring kind of thing.

Another faculty member added,

Yeah, I think it gives you a chance to talk to them, what problems, what classes you are in and what they did, and it just helps you a lot. You get to talk one-on-one with them. There is positive reinforcement too. You get the students that aren't so motivated. The only reason the teacher is saying, "You know you can do this," it's because the teacher believes and sees the potential in them. That's one of the things I see to bring out the positive reinforcement for the students that don't normally get it at home.

One of the most appreciated features of advisory was the "laid back style." "Just kind of be yourself; you are not under any pressure to prove anything to anybody. Just be you. And they support you for it." The support was extended from teacher to student and

from student to student, for example, the mentoring effect of older student to younger student with advice on everything from appropriate dress for homecoming to help with scheduling. "You can help with teachers, sometimes, different teaching styles. It helps you know what to look for, what to expect. You are more prepared."

Another student expressed a significant benefit:

Another good way that the advisory has paid off for me is that I've had my advisor write college recommendation letters for me for scholarships and everything with that, too, because they have a testament of how my work ethic is and how I've grown in all the different areas.

Students reported that they knew their advisor better than any of their other teachers.

"They are going to help you out, encouraging more like friend than like a teacher."

Having an adult that was always helpful was important to students. While classroom teachers may change with each new semester, the constancy of the advisor was both a comfort and an asset to students. In the focus groups students agreed that the most important part of the advisory program was the relationship they established with their advisors. A student confided,

They've helped me a lot during high school. They've taught me a lot and I've really established a really good relationship with them, and I think it will carry even after I leave here. And they really push me to try hard and not just with doing good on my reflections but in everything I have been involved in. It really helped.

One faculty advisor who did not use the recommended activities acknowledged,

They amazingly have done a better job of bonding, not necessarily as a whole huge group, but with each other. When you see them in the hall, it is kind of a special relationship with them. If you have a problem, you come to me. And if I don't know, I will find out for you. And I work on that every week. They do view it as a relationship idea and, to me, the 20 minutes is better used than 20 minutes on writing.

Some students had the opportunity to meet and work with faculty who they never would have known. One student's advisor became his biggest fan at sporting events. He emphasized the importance of relationships,

It seems to me relationship building, for sure, is a huge part of it. You get done with doing whatever tasks there are and you build relationships. You can do that in different ways. You guys have your style; some people don't have that style so they want to do it through curriculum.

Another advisor acknowledged the development of the relationships,

In the beginning of the year, freshmen, they don't say two words. Now I kind of hear them giggle. Midyear they kind of giggle. If I said something kind of sarcastic, the senior and freshmen giggle. Do I laugh or what? Now everyone just kind of gets along. Everyone talks. There's not that tension. Kids don't sit in separate groups anymore. I've had them over the course of the year come and talk to me about all sorts of stuff. That change and the fact they trust me now at least seems to feel comfortable with me. That one person watching them grow for four years, I think, it just adds to the relationship. I think that gives you a bond.

It is important to note the following perspective of a faculty member, "I know there are negatives. Some students might be more negative on the outside as a group just so they don't look like they like it. It's sort of a social thing. I'm going to look bad if I like advisory." Everyone had different expectations. All teachers had different styles. There was a varying degree of quality expected in the portfolios.

There were questionable outcomes for Senior Celebrations. However, one student said, "I didn't think it'd be that big of deal. I started remembering those memories and got kind of choked up about it." That type of response caused students to re-evaluate their opinion of Senior Celebration. "If it affects a few kids in that manner they might say this really was a worthy cause opposed to right now not going into it without a whole lot of direction."

#### Sense of Belonging High School Site C

Table 11 is composed of items from the survey that identify the sense of belonging focus of advisement. The percentage is the sum of the strongly agree and agree responses. Subsequent to the table is a discussion of the results including corresponding focus group commentary.

Table 11

#### Sense of Belonging – High School Site C

Survey Item	Percent Agreement
	% Strongly Agree + Agree
4. My advisor has helped me feel that I belong at my school.	68%
5. I look forward to meeting with my advisory group.	28%

Table 11 (continued)

## Sense of Belonging – High School Site C

Survey Item	Percent Agreement
	% Strongly Agree + Agree
15. I understand the school activity code.	59%
16. My advisor periodically refers to the respect code and other behavior guidelines.	53%
17. I like school.	46%
18. I feel the advisory has helped me improve my attitude toward school.	23%
19. My advisor has encouraged proper behavior and a positive attitude.	74%
22. My advisory group regularly receives and generates input into our student council.	27%
23. The advisory system involved all students in student government.	25%
24. My advisor has encouraged my active participation in school activities and community involvement.	63%
25. I am involved in school activities (i.e. music, sports, clubs, intramurals, etc.).	70%
31. The advisory group helps to improve school spirit.	41%
32. I look forward to going to school each day.	33%
33. I look forward to going to my advisory group.	29%

Has there been a change in the school climate? "There's been a lot less fights this year. I don't know if there is any association there, but maybe." The key seemed to be the creation of a sense of belonging and building relationships with significant adults. The students felt they belonged, and that someone cared about them in their school environment. However, only 29% looked forward to going to their advisory group while 33% looked forward to going to school each day. A student shared his perspective,

I think there's less of a prejudice from seniors to lower classmen. Because before, like, a lot of the classes I'm in, there's no freshman in them. It's all juniors and seniors, mostly. So I wouldn't know any of the freshmen. Now you know them and you realize, you know, I was in that boat one day, and you just don't see them walking down the hall. You get to know them. You think of them almost like as a little sibling because you are trying to help them out, help them succeed where they are.

Students were encouraged to become involved in school activities. Most importantly students were encouraged to be that best that they can be.

#### Communication at High School Site C

Table 12 is composed of items from the survey that identify the communication focus of advisement. The percentage is the sum of the strongly agree and agree responses. Subsequent to the table is a discussion of the results including corresponding focus group commentary.

Table 12

## Communication – High School Site C

Survey Item	Percent Agreement
	% Strongly Agree + Agree
12. I have been aware of what is happening throughout the school because of topics presented during the advisory period.	64%
13. School information is discussed on a regular basis during our advisory.	65%
14. My advisor kept me well informed of important school events and activities.	75%

One of the benefits of advisement was communication not only within the advisement but also within the entire school. Survey results showed that the advisor kept them well informed of school events (75%) and did so regularly (65%). The advisories met following the weekly faculty meetings. New information came directly from the meetings to the advisory groups. While the main focus of the groups was to complete work on their artifacts, much of the work was done outside of the advisory group leaving time for updates on school information.

## Discussion

The cross-site analysis of the three faculty-student advisory groups in this study was guided by the research questions. Similarities and differences were established through a comparison of the components determined to be important in the advisories:

history of the advisory; the educational component of the advisory; the relationships within the advisory (peer and advisor); the sense of belonging; and communication within the advisory. Composite graphs are included where appropriate.

### Site Descriptions

It is important to establish the context of the three schools prior to beginning the comparison of the factors of this study. Site A High School had an enrollment of 1,200+ students in grades 10-12 in a suburban setting. On the Iowa Tests of Educational Development their 11<sup>th</sup> grade students were 78.2% proficient in reading, 92.1% proficient in math, and 91.6 % proficient in science. Site B High School had an enrollment of 2,200+ in grades 9-12 in an urban setting. Iowa Tests of Educational Development reported the 11<sup>th</sup> grade students were 77.7% proficient in reading and 77.3% proficient in math. Their science scores were not reported. Site C High School had an enrollment of 1,300+ students in grades 9-12 in a small city setting. On the Iowa Tests of Educational Development their 11<sup>th</sup> grade students were 82.4% proficient in reading, 77.4% proficient in math, and 81.3% proficient in science. In summary, two of the high schools (A & C) in the study were similar in size (each 1,200+ students). The third high school (B) had 2,200+ students. Each school was similar in academic achievement in reading as indicated by the Iowa Tests of Educational Development (77.1% - 82.4% range).

### History of the Development of Advisory Programs at the Three Sites

Advisory groups at Site A were developed in 1998 for all grade levels. Every certified staff member had a group. Support staff assisted administrators. The randomly assigned groups were composed of equal numbers from each grade level and met weekly



for 25 minutes. Students remained in the same advisory throughout their high school experience. Attendance was required. Two teachers coordinated the program and provided weekly preparatory sessions, which were optional for the advisors.

Advisory groups at Site B were developed in 1999. Every certified staff member and some volunteer support staff had a group. Students were alphabetically assigned with students from every grade classification in each group. Students were to remain with the same advisor throughout their high school experience. However, attendance was not mandatory and some students chose to attend other advisory groups or chose to attend no group. The advisory groups met weekly for 19 minutes. A faculty committee scheduled the advisory activities by the semester.

Advisory groups at Site C were developed in 1998 with the entering ninth grade class. Each year an additional class was added until full inclusion was reached in the fall of 2001. Students were randomly assigned with students from every grade classification in each group. Students remained with the same advisory group throughout their high school experience. The advisories met weekly for 25 minutes. A faculty committee scheduled some of the advisory activities but the focus was upon the writing of reflections for the 12 artifacts that supported the six district learning goals.

In summary, two of the schools (A & C) began their programs in 1998 with the third (B) beginning in 1999. School C advisors were certified staff members, School A advisors were certified staff with classified staff paired with administrators, and School B advisors were certified and classified staff. The advisory groups met each Tuesday at all three schools. Schools A and C groups met for 25 minutes while School B met for 19 minutes. Groups at each school were randomly assigned with a mix of grade levels. The

groups remain together throughout their high school career. Sardo-Brown and Shetlar (1994) endorsed this concept as did Myrick et al. (1986).

Four major areas were explored in this advisory group research: educational focus of the advisement, relationships of peers and advisor, sense of belonging, and communication within the advisory group. A discussion of each follows.

#### Educational Focus of Advisory Programs at the Three Sites

One focus of advisement at Site A High School was scheduling and career planning. Time for one-on-one sessions of the advisor with the advisee was scheduled in preparation for the individual conferences. Advisors reviewed their academic progress and helped the students prepare a plan for their educational future. Over 70% of the students supported this outcome. A high percentage (96%) of the students surveyed agreed that they alone assumed responsibility for their academic progress. Only 43% agreed that the advisory prepared students to deal with issues and problems they will face in the future.

Future planning and academic progress were not a part of the focus for advisement groups at Site B High School. Only 35% agreed that their advisor helped to prepare a plan for their educational future. A high percentage (79%) of the students surveyed agreed that they alone assumed responsibility for their academic progress. Only 54% agreed that the advisory prepared students to deal with issues and problems they will face in the future.

The focus of the advisory program at Site C High School was the writing of reflections and the collecting of 12 artifacts that addressed the 6 district learning goals. A

rule book detailed the sub goals within each goal. Class status rested upon the completion of 3 artifacts per year. The culminating activity was the Senior Celebration which provided an opportunity for the students to share what they have learned with their parents/guardians and advisor. Students (90%) assumed responsibility for their academic progress. Students (66%) were assisted with scheduling and program planning. Only 35% agreed that the advisories helped them prepare to deal with issues and future problems.

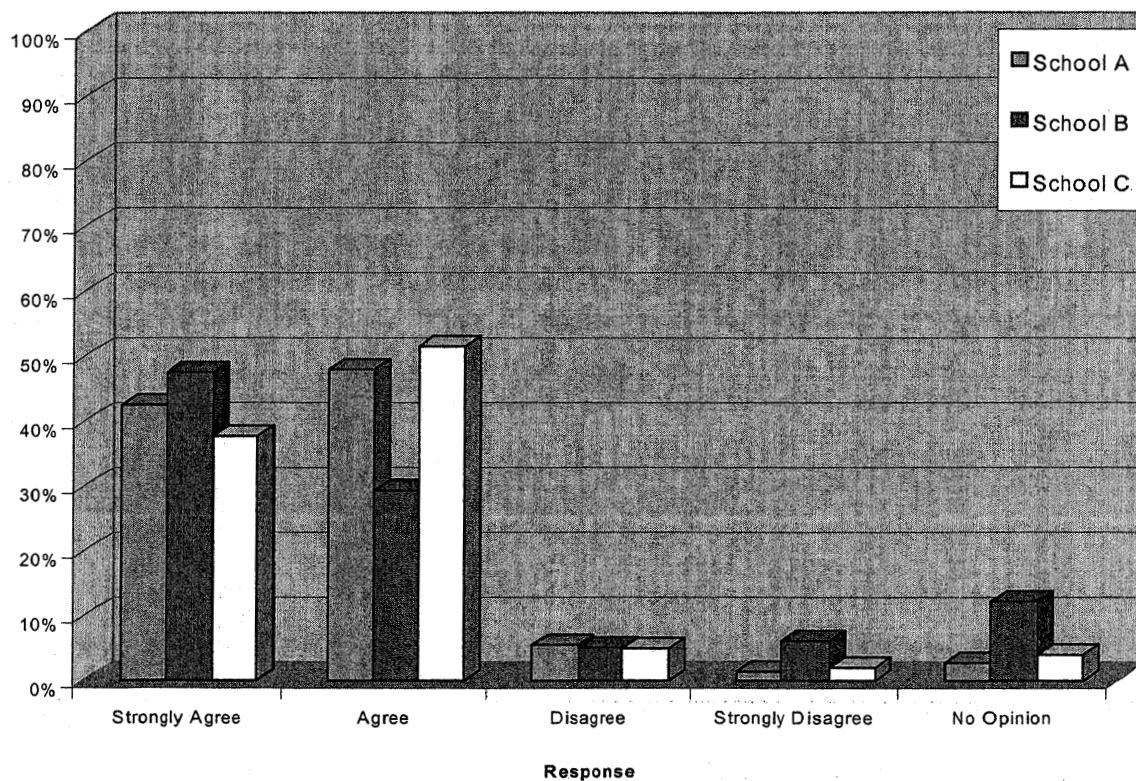


Figure 1. I assume responsibility for my academic progress.

Figure 1 illustrating the students' responses to academic responsibility is very interesting when viewed in light of the following graph (Figure 2).

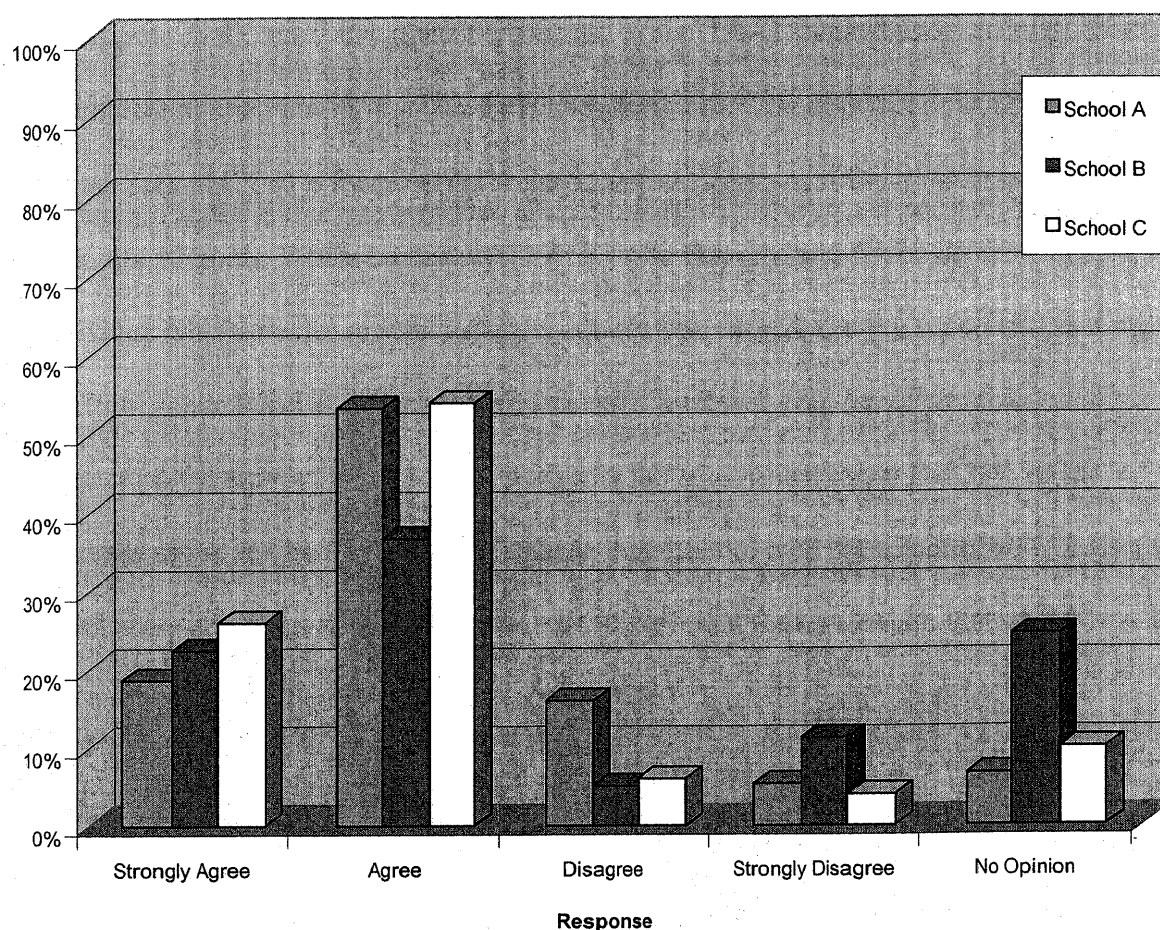


Figure 2. My advisor cares about my academic progress.

It appears that while the student perceived the adult as caring about his/her academic progress, they recognize that only they are responsible for making it happen.

Consequently, it does not appear that advisory programs are effective in the area of academic achievement.

In summary, the educational focus varied between the three high schools. School A had a focus on scheduling and career planning. Advisors at School A spent time beyond scheduled advisory time meeting individually with their advisees. Frost (1990) defined advising as a relationship based on shared responsibility in which students

participate in the academic planning process. Walz (1984) focused upon the importance of improving their ability to make their own decisions. School B had no educational focus. School C had a focus on the collection of artifacts and reflections in support of the school's 12 goals. While Lounsbury (1996) wrote that advisors find it difficult to direct activities which are not graded, advisors at both School A & C were successful in doing so. Both schools had a majority of students who agreed during focus group discussion, but not on the survey. Even School B without the educational focus had 39% of the students agree that his/her advisor had been very helpful with the selection of classes and curriculum planning. Killin and Williams (1995) found the curriculum that works best is the one that meets the needs of the students.

#### Relationships Between Students and Faculty at the Three Sites

Research at the middle school level (Cole, 1994; Galassi et al., 1997; George, 1987; Johnston, 1997; Mac Iver, 1990; Myrick et al., 1986; O'Neil, 1997; Sardo-Brown & Shetlar, 1994; Vars, 1997) indicated that advisors in an advisor/advisee relationship have the potential to make a difference. This research at the secondary level (high school) supports the middle school findings.

The faculty at Site A High School emphasized a second focus of advisement was relationship building. Advisement forced people to interact with others they may never have met. There were many team-building activities the first semester. Students (78%) agreed that they could easily talk to their advisor. Students (64%) agreed that their advisor cared about their academic progress. Only 51% agreed that the members of their advisory group shared concerns and interests with one another.

Relationship building was purported by the faculty at Site B High School to be the focus of their advisory groups. Students (95%) agreed that they could easily talk to their advisor. Students (61%) agreed that their advisor cared about their academic progress. Only 53% agreed that the members of their advisory group shared concerns and interests with one another. However, the focus groups shared that students did not know one another and due to the lack of mandatory attendance many did not attend. One staff member identified the lack of staff buy-in as a critical factor in the lack of student buy-in. Lounsbury (1996) noted that there was a resistance to restructuring. Killin and Williams (1995) wrote of the sabotage that can occur from staff members who are uncomfortable with the affective components. The teacher is the key to the success of the advisory program (Cole, 1994). If the teacher does not implement the program with his/her advisory group, the program fails for that group of students and teacher (Cole, 1994; Vars, 1997). "When a vocal minority of the faculty opposes the program, success is jeopardized" (Cole, 1994, p. 6). The outcomes of an advisement program are most influenced by the advisor (Boorstein, 1997). This research of the high school advisement program supports the middle school research regarding the influence of the advisor.

Relationship building was a secondary benefit of advisories at Site C. Students (93%) agreed that they could easily talk to their advisor. Students (84%) agreed that their advisor cared about their academic progress. Watching the students grow for four years created a special bond with the advisor. Only 51% agreed that members of their advisory group shared concerns and interests with one another. Students in the focus groups believed that the mentoring factor played an important role in their advisory. The younger students had the benefit of the experiences of the upper classmen. The purposes of an



advisement most frequently cited by the surveyed teachers in the study by George (1987) were to build positive teacher-student relationships and to help students with the transition between grade levels. These advisement groups studied are fulfilling those purposes.

One of the most appreciated features of Site C High School advisory groups was the "laid back style". Students felt that they could just be themselves. George (1987) identified the importance of a time to relax as well.

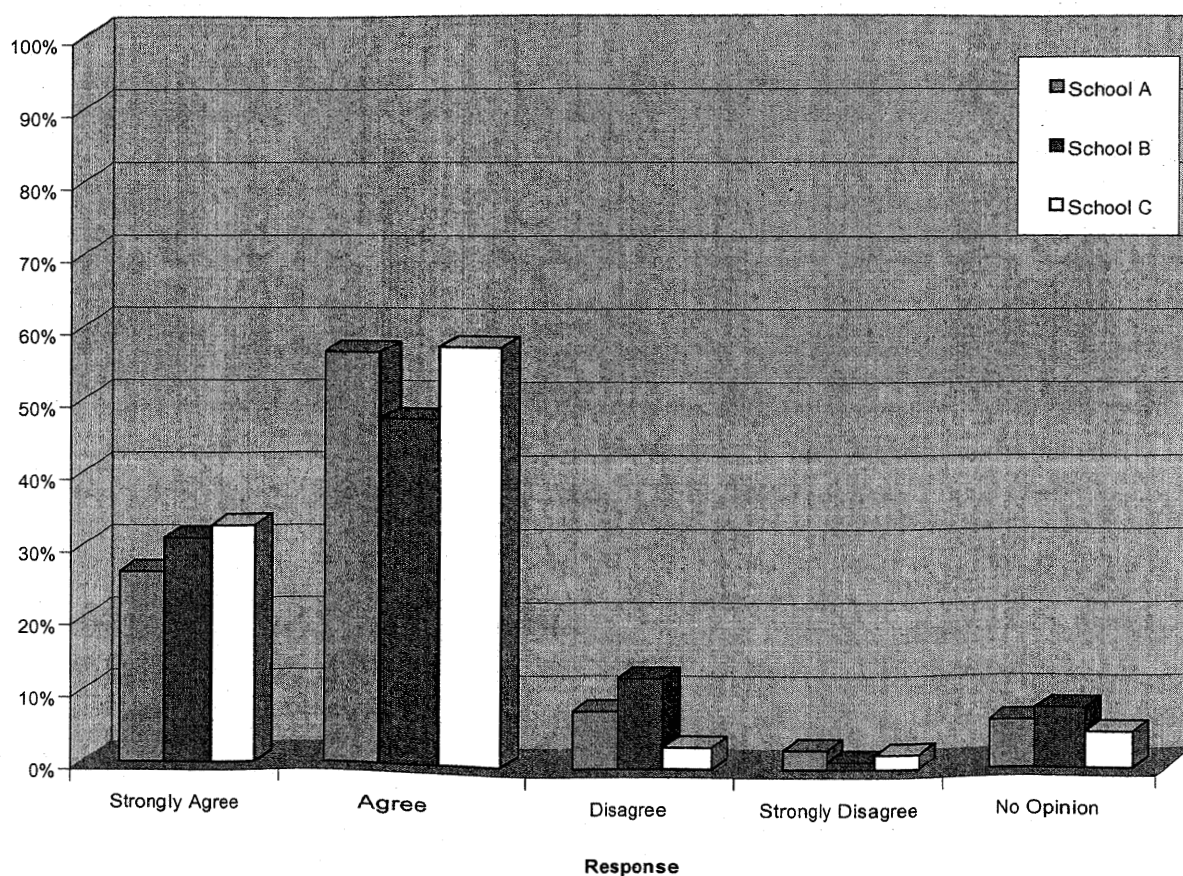


Figure 3. My advisor is available to talk with me.

Figure 3 compares the responses of the 3 schools. Clearly, the advisor is readily available for the students.

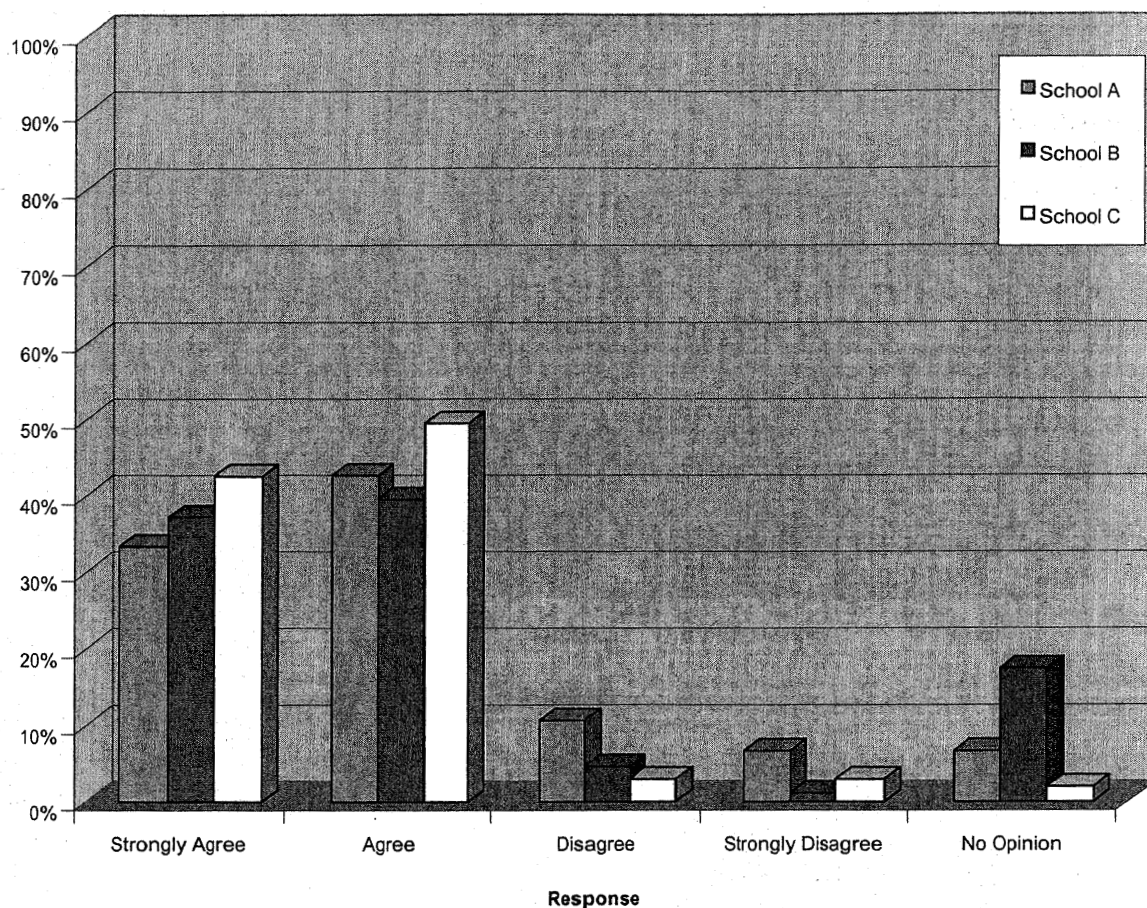


Figure 4. I can talk easily with my advisor.

Figure 4 graphically depicts the responses of the students indicating an ease of talking with their advisors. Figure 5 illustrates that advisory groups afford the students an opportunity to get acquainted with their advisories. Discussion points to the fact that many students are paired with adults they never would have met.



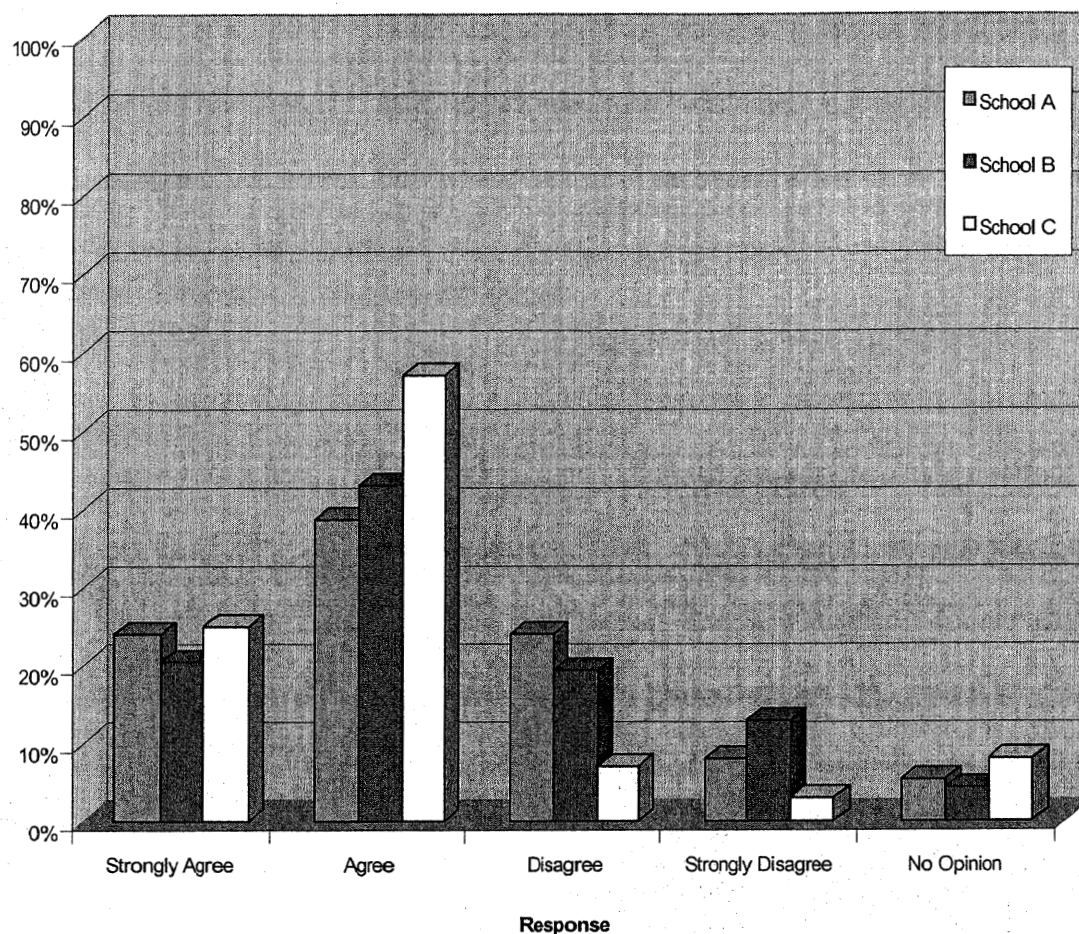


Figure 5. My advisor and I have had an opportunity to get well acquainted during the year.

In summary, students strongly agreed with the ease of talking with their advisors. School C more strongly agreed by approximately 15%. This school spent considerable time working on student artifacts as compared to the other schools that devoted more time to relationship building. Johnston (1997) wrote that conversation between teachers and students was the most desirable activity in advisement, but was the least likely to happen. This research would indicate that it is happening in these secondary groups as compared to the middle school findings. Students' high agreement with opportunities to get acquainted and the availability of the advisor to talk with the student further support

this. Galassi et al. (1997) focused on the key concepts of advisement: relationship building and involvement. Adolescents need social and emotional support to succeed as students (Mac Iver, 1990). This would be true of secondary advisement groups as well.

#### Sense of Belonging Within the Advisories at the Three Sites

At Site A High School 75% agreed that the advisor encouraged proper behavior and a positive attitude. While only 50% agreed that the advisor encouraged school participation, 70% agreed that they were involved in school activities. Students (50%) agreed that their advisor helped them feel that they belonged at school. More students (49%) looked forward to going to their advisory group than the 43% who looked forward to going to school. Seniors felt that advisory should be an optional activity for them.

At Site B High School 68% agreed that the advisor encouraged proper behavior and a positive attitude. While only 55% agreed that the advisor encouraged school participation, 70% agreed that they were involved in school activities. Students (54%) agreed that their advisor helped them feel that they belonged at school. More students (67%) looked forward to going to their advisory group than the 48% who looked forward to going to school.

At Site C High School 74% agreed that the advisor encouraged proper behavior and a positive attitude. While only 63% agreed that the advisor encouraged school participation, 70% agreed that they were involved in school activities. Students (68%) agreed that their advisor helped them feel that they belonged at school. Fewer students (29%) looked forward to going to their advisory group than the 33% who looked forward to going to school. Seniors felt that advisory should be an optional activity for them. The

advisory groups have created a bond between classes that improved the school climate according to the focus group of students.

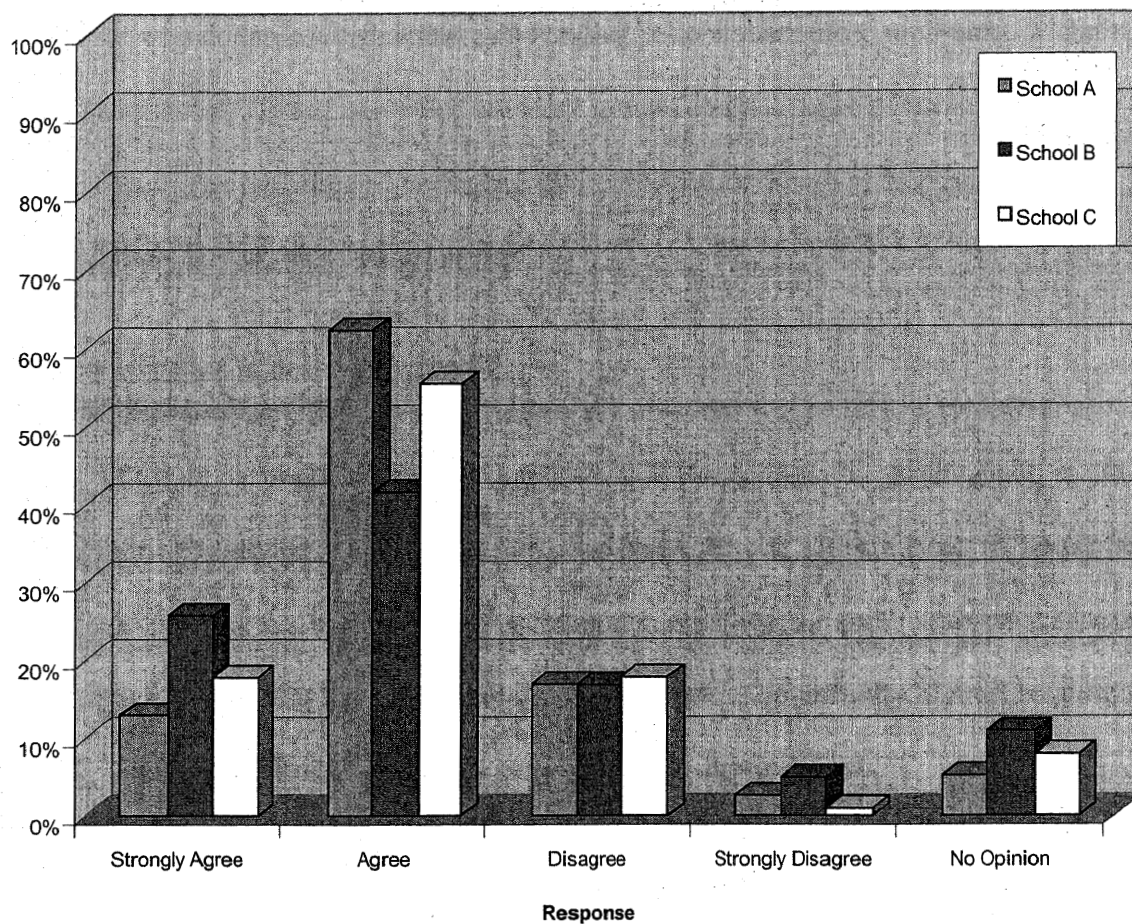


Figure 6. My advisor has encouraged proper behavior and a positive attitude.

Figure 6 illustrates the responses of the 3 schools to the effect the advisor has had with influencing the behavior, attitude, and consequently improving the climate of the 3 high schools.

In summary, while all three school advisories encouraged proper behavior, the percentages at schools A and C were higher than at school B. School participation was

ranked at 70% by all schools but that did not relate to the degree of encouragement by the advisor. More students at School C felt that they belonged than at the other two schools. However, while students at A and B schools more look forward to advisement than to going to school, students at School C did not. Goodenow and Grady (1993) found that students who do have a high sense of belonging in school are more motivated. Manning and Saddlemire (1996a) wrote that advisory groups create a sense of community. It would seem that the sense of belonging of the students at School C is greater for their school than for their advisement group.

#### Communication Within the Advisory Groups at the Three Sites

One of the benefits of advisement at Site A School was the communication not only within the advisement but also within the entire school. The students (74%) felt well informed on a regular basis (73%). The communication was a combination of academic and social. Representatives from each advisement had an opportunity to meet in groups of 25 with the principal to share concerns for school improvement.

Students at Site B High School identified communication as a strong benefit of their advisement. The students (71%) felt well informed on a regular basis (67%). While not identified as one of the main purposes of advisory groups at Site B, the communication responses were overall higher than other areas surveyed.

The third school, Site C School, concurred that one of the important benefits of the advisory groups was communication. The students (75%) felt well informed on a regular basis (65%). New information came directly to the advisory groups following the weekly faculty meetings.



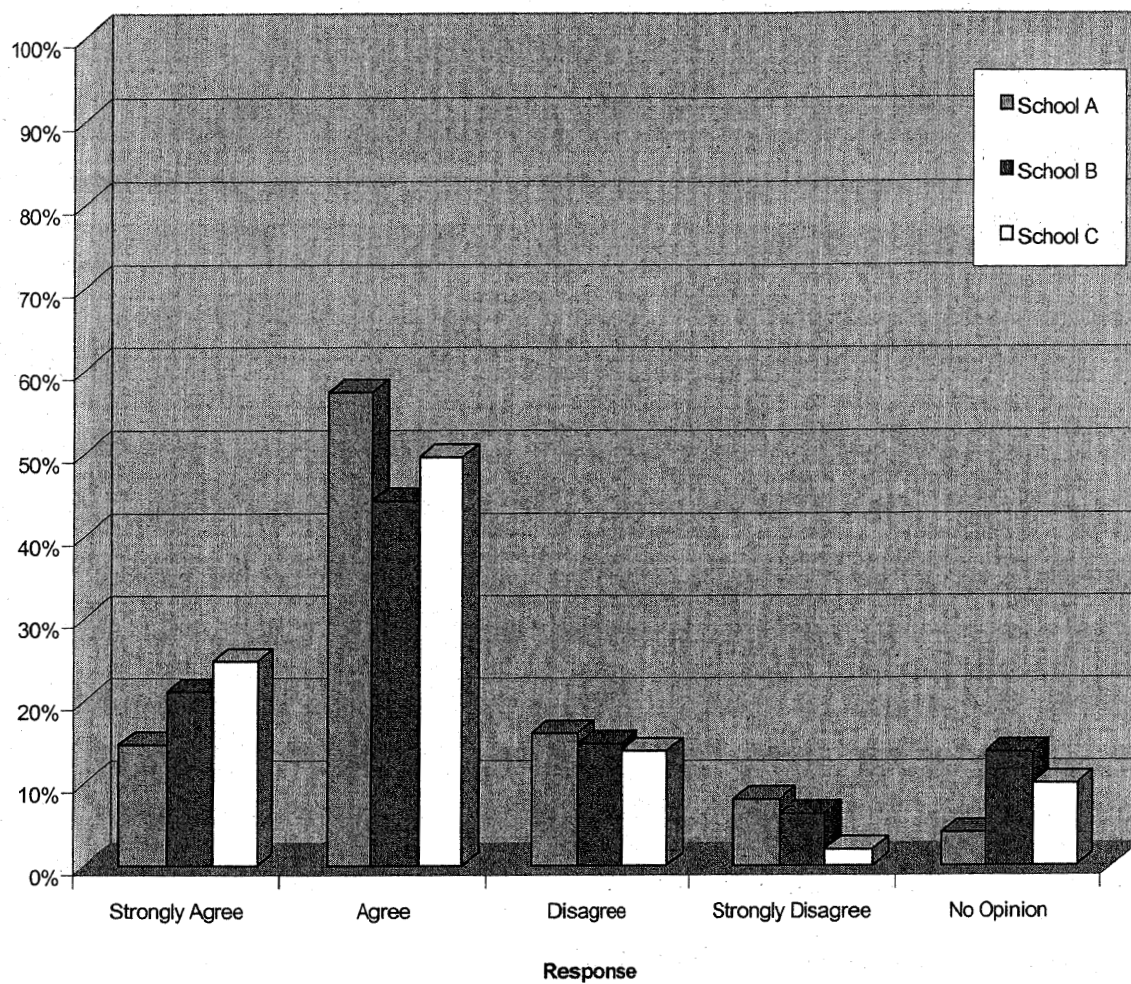


Figure 7. My advisor keeps me well informed of important school events and activities.

Communication was very effective through the advisory programs according to the students surveyed. Figure 8 follows depicting strong agreement of the students that school information is discussed on a regular basis during the advisory meetings.

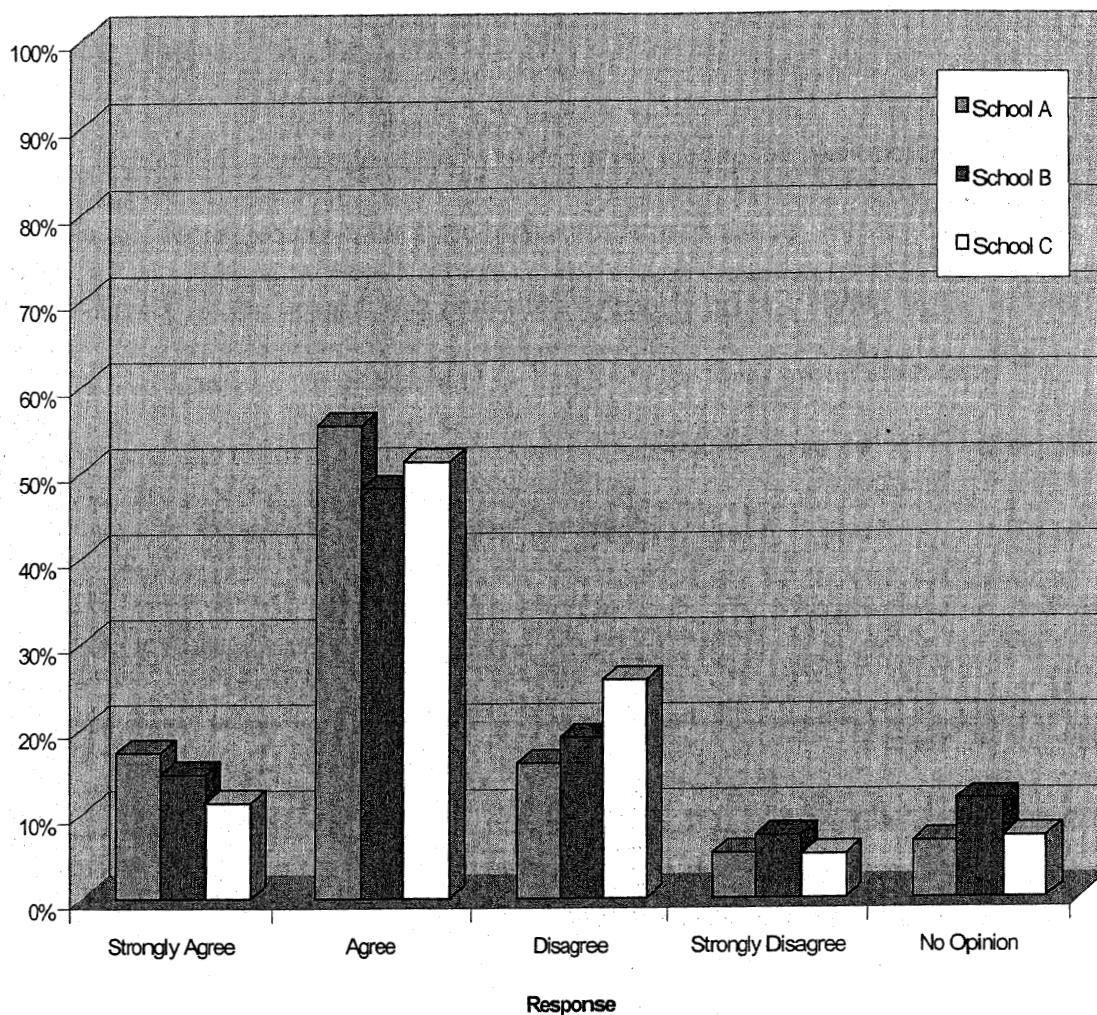


Figure 8. School information is discussed on a regular basis during our advisory meetings.

In summary, students at all three schools identified communication as a great benefit of the advisory groups. Killin and Williams (1995) clarified that the intent of advisement was to teach communication. George and Oldaker (1985) found a reduction in discipline referrals as a result of advisement in the middle school. The schools studied reported a decrease in incidents of fights at each site.

### Emerging Themes From the Three High School Advisory Programs

Table 13 is composed of items identified as the top themes emerging from the surveys and focus groups at the three high schools in this study. Survey items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 9 received the highest total percentage (strongly agree + agree) on the first survey. Items 4, 7, 10, and 11 were consistent themes from the focus group interviews. The percentage in the following table is the sum of the strongly agree and agree responses. Subsequent to the table is a discussion of the results.

Table 13

#### Themes of Findings from Three High Schools

Survey Item	Percent Agreement
	% Strongly Agree + Agree
1. Advisors are available and easy to talk to.	74%
2. Communication about school events and activities is an important benefit of advisement.	61%
3. Although advisors care about our academic progress, the student is the only one that can make it happen.	74%
4. The educational benefit of advisement is the help with selecting the courses I should take in high school.	49%
5. My advisor has helped me feel that I belong at school by encouraging my active participation in school activities.	44%
6. In advisement I have had an opportunity to meet people I would never have known.	68%

Table 13 (continued)

## Themes of Findings from Three High Schools

Survey Item	Percent Agreement
	% Strongly Agree + Agree
7. It is important in a school this size to have small groups like this where a student has a connection throughout their high school experience.	57%
8. The perfect activity in our advisory group would be to relax and talk about an issue that is important to members of our group.	64%
9. I like having an advisory group that I belong to where I can be myself and not be judged by anyone.	53%
10. Advisement is only as good as the advisor.	62%

The themes evolved as receiving the highest percentage of strongly agree and agree statements from a combination of the data from the three schools' survey and focus group results. The categories were education, relationships, sense of belonging and communication. Six of the themes received a super majority (60% or greater): advisor availability, communication, caring advisor, opportunity to meet people, perfect activity (relax and talk), and advisement is only as good as the advisor. Two of the themes received only a majority (50% - 59%): importance of small groups in large high school and having a group where I belong and can be myself. The remaining two themes,



assistance with course selection and advisor encouraging participation in activities fell into the 40 – 49% category. While School A had this as a focus, the other two schools did not.

The effectiveness of advisement groups lies in the opportunities to develop caring relationships with an adult and with other students, to communicate school-wide opportunities, and to establish groups where one belongs. Clearly the success is dependent upon the adult advisor. The pseudo-sophistication of high school students appeared to create a reluctance of students to acknowledge the safety net provided by the advisement groups. Privately a student shared that it was great to have a “club” that they belonged to, where there were no try-outs, and where they could just be themselves.

### Data Triangulation

Table 14 identifies the sources of affirmation for the major findings of this research. Anfara, Brown and Mangione (2002) influenced the structure of the table. They wrote of the integrity of qualitative research. Tables were recommended to depict the data sources and thus provide an opportunity for public inspection of qualitative studies. "Internal validity is concerned with how trustworthy the conclusions are that are drawn from the data and the match of these conclusions with reality, while external validity refers to how well conclusions can be generalized to a larger population" (Anfara et al., 2002, p. 33). The table documents the actions associated with establishing internal validity (triangulation). Those actions include interviews, observations, first survey, and second survey. The table places 11 major findings into the 4 major categories of the research.

Table 14

## Matrix of Findings and Sources for Data Triangulation

Major findings	Source of data			
	I	O	S (1)	S (2)
<u>Category 1: Relationships</u>				
1. Advisors are available and easy to talk to.	X	X	X	X
2. Advisors care about the student's academic progress.	X		X	X
3. In advisement the students have the opportunity to meet people they would never have known.	X	X	X	X
4. Advisement is only as good as the advisor.	X	X		X
<u>Category 2: Educational Focus</u>				
5. The student assumes responsibility for his/her academic progress.	X		X	X
6. The educational benefit of advisement is the help with selecting the courses the student should take in high school.	X		X	X
7. The perfect activity in an advisory group would be to relax and talk about an issue that is important to members of our group.	X	X		X

Table 14 (continued)

## Matrix of Findings and Sources for Data Triangulation

	Source of data			
	I	O	S (1)	S (2)
Major findings				
<u>Category 3: Communication</u>				
8. Communication about school events and activities				
is an important benefit of advisement.	X	X	X	X
<u>Category 4: Sense of Belonging</u>				
9. The student's advisor has helped the student to feel				
he/she belongs at school by encouraging active				
participation in school activities.	X		X	X
10. It is important in a school this size to have small				
groups like advisement where a student has a				
connection throughout their high school experience.	X	X		X
11. Students like having an advisory group that they				
belong to where they can be themselves and not be				
judged by anyone.		X	X	
X				

Note. I = Interview, O = Observation, S (1) = First Survey, S (2) = Second Survey.

## Chapter 5

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The focus of this research was to examine student perceptions of three secondary school faculty-student advisory programs. Specifically, the Grand Tour question (McCracken, 1988) was: what are the students' perceptions of the importance or relevance of their advisory program at this point in time in secondary learning? While the research is plentiful at the middle school level, there is a dearth of research at the high school level. Following the 1996 recommendation of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), high schools across the nation have implemented some variation of an advisement group. There are no standardized models to follow. The intent of this study was to analyze three advisory programs at the high school level as perceived by the students.

Information in this study was gathered using survey questionnaires, observations and interviews. The 100 surveys were distributed at each of the three large high schools. There were 279 surveys completed and scanned. Following the surveys, two focus groups were held at each site, one composed of students, the other of faculty. The survey data were analyzed using combined percentages of *strongly agree* and *agree* respondents. The qualitative data were coded and analyzed. For verification purposes, a follow-up survey containing the 10 major themes was administered to students selected randomly. Again 100 surveys were distributed at each of the schools. There were 295 surveys completed

and scanned. These were analyzed using the combined percentages of *strongly agree* and *agree* respondents.

The primary focus of the advisory groups differed at each of the 3 sites. One school targeted scheduling / academic planning. Another school focused on relationship building. Students in these two schools appreciated the more relaxed style that predominated and looked forward more to attending advisement than to attending school. The third school focused upon the collection of academic artifacts and the writing of corresponding reflections. The latter was more of a classroom assignment and consequently students at this school looked forward more to attending school than they did to attending their advisory group. This research study clearly indicated that relationship building was a strong and very effective outcome of each advisory program without regard to focus.

Survey questions regarding communication were rated highly effective with each student body. The students felt more informed about school events and activities. Students enjoyed developing a relationship with someone who was a constant throughout their high school experience other than their classroom teachers who changed with each semester. Benefits included adult encouragement, support, advice, and comfort. Students also enjoyed developing relationships with the diverse group of students found in randomly assigned advisory groups. The relationships that developed within the advisory groups provided a mentoring for underclassmen and flowed throughout the school with the positive impact of creating an improved overall school environment.

Even students disengaged in school reported valuing advisement. They looked forward more to attending advisement than to attending school. Students acknowledged

that with the right advisor it was most beneficial. If the advisement program is to be successful, it is critical to have teacher support. Without it the advisement program will fail for those students.

### Conclusions

The creation of advisory groups at the high school level has provided an opportunity to inform current practice. The heart of this study has three major findings:

1. **Advisory programs at the secondary level provide the opportunity for relationship building.** The advisors were perceived as caring, available and easy to talk to. Relationships formed easily as student spent time with a diverse group of students and an adult they may never have known. Mentor relationships grew as older students provided the younger ones with survival tips and guidance. As student acquaintances developed across grade levels, there was an increase in the collegiality in the school. In a large school groups of students with common interest tend to spend all their time together. Through random assignments to advisory groups, students were afforded opportunities to know the diverse population of the student body. This has effectively increased the student's sense of belonging and overall improved the school climate. Students looked forward to attending advisement more than attending school. This is an opportunity to know and lift every child.
2. **Advisory programs provide an opportunity for communication of important high school events.** On a regular basis school information regarding upcoming events, opportunities and other items of student interest were discussed during the advisory meetings. In large schools there tends to be an isolationism of groups.

Students in these groups have common interests and keep abreast of the events pertaining to their area of interest. Discussion of the various school events in advisement creates enthusiasm and support of one group for another. Students are able to offer support to one another not only verbally but also with their presence at the various extracurricular events. This contributes to their increased sense of belonging, as students become more involved with school activities.

3. **The impact of advisement is dependent upon the implementation skills of the advisor.** Secondary teachers tend to focus upon the content of the courses they teach. With the pressures of the academic preparation for college or the work force, teachers have little time to really know their students on an individual basis. Advisory programs provide that time. Students most appreciate the advisor who shares his/her personal story of how they got to where they are today, what they did last weekend, and what their hopes and dreams are. By the sharing of stories, students and adults really get to know one another. The advisor who demonstrates caring, who allows students to know them, and who is comfortable facilitating discussions of issues perceived as important to the student is most effective. The success of advisory groups comes from a commitment of the adult and the student.

#### Implications for Policy and Practice

There are several implications for advisory programs at the secondary level. Each of these focuses on the three hearts of a faculty-student advisory program--relationships, communication and the advisor.

- Central to the success of the program is the advisor. Some teachers view the advisor

role as needing the skills and training of a counselor. Many are more comfortable teaching their academic curricula than they are facilitating a casual discussion about a topic beyond the scope of their educational preparation. Professional development with facilitation training would increase the comfort level of each advisor. Providing weekly preparatory sessions in advance of the advisement meetings could improve their skills. Opportunities to share facilitation tips whether it is in weekly preparatory sessions or through mentoring pairs of advisor to advisor should be considered.

- Relationship building is the most important outcome of the advisory program. It provides the opportunities for students to make connections with students from other grade levels and with an adult other than their classroom teacher. The involvement of support staff increases the opportunities for students to gain additional support. Initially activities must be planned for the students and adult to get to know one another. The sharing of each other's stories builds relationships and caring. "The more you know; the more you care." Advisement time should provide an opportunity for the students and the teacher to discuss their pleasures and pains in a welcoming environment. With the changing demographics of our society, many students only have this supportive structure at school. School climate will improve. Adequate time should be allocated for the advisory programs and mandatory attendance should be required of all advisees.



- Communication is equally important. Students often are unaware of the many opportunities available in a large high school. They become myopic in their view of events and miss events, deadlines and other important information. With a ratio of 15:1, the advisor can provide the information relevant to all students and the information relevant to each particular student. This is a demonstration of caring, but more importantly it increases the connection of the students to their school. The communication increases opportunities for participation, as each student becomes familiar with the many academic and extracurricular events.
- Connections to student government with representatives chosen from each advisory group should be considered. This provides students with a voice and would include a greater number of students. The student selected would represent the views of his advisory group and in turn would provide his/her group with information from the student council meetings. Regularly scheduled meetings of these representatives with the principal would also enhance the communication within the school and provide the connections for student investiture in their school.
- While many students voiced a preference for a relaxed atmosphere with a discussion of issues they considered to be relevant, thought should be given to the value of individual conferences for academic planning. Parents, students and the advisor could meet yearly to plan the strategies that would be in place for the student to successfully enter the post secondary training or work site of their choice. This is certainly a most relevant topic and gives structure and support for both short term and long term goal

setting and future planning. Strong administrative support increases the likelihood of success of the program.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

- This study was conducted with students in advisory groups at high schools with enrollments of 1,000+. Research studies of the perceptions of students in smaller high schools would contribute to a greater understanding of the effects of faculty-student advisory groups on schools and on students.
- This study identified communication as a benefit of advisory groups. A comparative study of school advisory groups with two-way communication (opportunities to have representation to either the student government or to the administration) to those with one-way communication (information dissemination) would further inform the study of advisory groups.
- This study identified one advisement program that consisted of future planning conferences for students, parents, and the advisor. A follow-up study of graduates from schools with this offering would determine the effectiveness of this practice.
- Data were collected by gender, by grade level, and by length of time in the advisory program. Studies in each of these areas would continue to inform the practice of advisory programs.
- Due to the "group think", individual interviews might provide a more accurate picture of advisory programs. Students who benefit the most from the advisement might be reluctant to share publicly what they would freely share in private.

- The impact of the advisory program was found to be dependent upon the facilitation skills of the advisor. Studies to compare the effectiveness of the different content area advisors would continue to inform the development of advisory programs.
- With the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, there is great potential for the development of academic advising within the advisement groups. There is need for further study to determine this potential and the effectiveness of advisory programs engaged in this effort.

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Appendix A  
Survey Questionnaire (1)

I am a researcher and doctoral candidate in the field of education at Drake University. I am studying experiences with student-faculty advisory programs. I appreciate your honesty and cooperation as you answer the following questions.

Please use a #2 pencil. Please use the following scale for questions 1 – 33. Questions have their own answer set. There are two short answer questions at the end of the survey.

A. Strongly agree    B. Agree    C. Disagree    D. Strongly disagree    E. No opinion

1. I can talk easily to my advisor.
2. My advisor and I have had an opportunity to get well acquainted during this year.
3. My advisor is available to talk to me.
4. My advisor has helped me feel that I belong at my school.
5. I look forward to meeting with my advisory group.
6. The members of my advisory group share concerns and interests with one another.
7. My advisor has been very helpful with my curriculum planning and selection of classes.
8. My advisor has assisted me with my program plan, course selections and registration.
9. My advisor has helped me to clear up questions about my three (four)-year plan of study at my high school.
10. My study habits and techniques have improved during the past year as a result of my involvement with my advisory group.
11. My study habits and techniques have improved through activities in the advisory group.
12. I have been aware of what is happening throughout the school because of topics presented during the advisory period.

13. School information is discussed on a regular basis during our advisory meetings.
14. My advisor kept me well informed of important school events and activities.
15. I understand the school activity code.
16. My advisor periodically refers to the respect code and other behavior guidelines.
17. I like school.
18. I feel the advisory has helped me improve my attitude toward school.
19. My advisor has encouraged proper behavior and a positive attitude.
20. My advisor knows about my progress in other classes.
21. I know that my advisor has been in contact with other teachers related to my progress in class.
22. My advisory group regularly receives and generates input into our student council.
23. The advisory system involved all students in student government.
24. My advisor has encouraged my active participation in school activities and community involvement.
25. I am involved in school activities (i.e. music, sports, clubs, intramurals, etc.).
26. I assume responsibility for my academic progress.
27. My advisor cares about my academic progress.
28. My advisory group is preparing students to deal with issues and problems they will face in the future.
29. Advisors offer the help I need in program planning.
30. Advisors offer me the help I need in the selection of a vocation or career.
31. The advisory group helps improve school spirit.
32. I look forward to going to school each day.

33. I look forward to going to my advisory group.
34. My grade point average is (A) 3.50 or above (B) 3.00 – 3.49 (C) 2.50 – 2.99 (D) 2.00 – 2.49 (E) Below 2.00.
35. I have been in a student-faculty advisory group for (A) 4 years (B) 3 years (C) 2 years (D) 1 year.
36. I am currently a student in grade (A) 9 (B) 10 (C) 11 (D) 12.
37. I am a (A) Male (B) Female.
38. In WRITE-IN AREA 1 on the back, please list the strengths of your advisory program.
39. In WRITE-IN AREA 2 on the back, please list the weaknesses of your advisory program.
40. Additional comments may be written into WRITE-IN AREA 3, on the back.

## Appendix B Interview Protocol

Project: High School Faculty-student Advisory Program

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

Questions:

Grand Tour Question: What are the students' perceptions of the importance or relevance of an advisory program at this point in time in secondary learning?

1. Please introduce yourself and tell me what grade your are in. Please share something you would like me to know about you.
2. Tell me about your advisory group.
3. Describe activities that typically occur during your advisory period.
4. What changes have occurred since you first began advisory meetings?
5. How would you describe the relationships in your advisory? With students? With your advisor?
6. How would you describe the effect advisories have had on overall school relationships?
7. What in your opinion is the importance or relevance of your advisory at this point in time in secondary learning?
8. What is the best thing about your advisory?
9. What needs to be improved in your advisory?
10. What other opinions do you have about your advisory group?

## Appendix C Lay Summary

### Student Perceptions of Three Secondary School Faculty-student Advisory Programs

In 1996 the national Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) published *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, which resulted in recommendations for school reform. A key concept emphasized that the principal and teachers must create a climate favorable to education and do every thing possible to sustain that climate. One of the components in the creation of that environment stipulated that, "Every high school student would have a Personal Adult Advocate to help him or her personalize the educational experience" (p. 31).

Since then, high schools throughout the nation have implemented some type of student-faculty advisory programs. I am conducting research to determine the students' perceptions of an advisory program with a focus on student relationships and their sense of belonging.

I want to know what students think. I will survey 100 students at each of three large high schools. I will follow the surveys with focus groups of 6 – 10 students at each location. I will also ask teachers to engage in a focus group at each site.

The research will not disclose the identification of any individual or school.

I appreciate the opportunity to work with you as I enter the final phase of my doctoral studies.

Vicky P. Poole  
Doctoral Candidate  
Drake University

Appendix D  
Participant Consent Form

May 6, 2002

Dear Students:

Currently I am working on my doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa. For my research I am planning to conduct a study that will examine the student-faculty advisory programs at several large high schools.

The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the program. Data for my research will be collected through the surveys, focus group interviews, and field notes. You are asked to participate in a small focus group interview.

Your responses will provide valuable insights to my study. I encourage you to be open and honest and to freely share your experiences. In order to use this information in my research paper, and in the event this information might be included in an article submitted for publication, I need to request your consent to participate in this study. While I will be reporting a summary of all responses, your individual responses will be kept confidential. If you feel you need to withdraw from the study, you may do so at any time.

Thank you very much for your consideration. If you or your parents do not want you to participate, please clip the consent form found at the bottom of this page and return it in the provided envelope by May 8, 2002. I appreciate your cooperation and participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Vicky P. Poole, Sp.D.  
Doctoral Candidate  
Drake University

Dr. Sally Beisser, Ph.D.  
Dissertation Chairperson  
Drake University

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I do not give my consent for my student to participate in a focus group interview for this study.

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

---

Signature of Parent

---

Date

Appendix E  
Survey Questionnaire (2)

I am a researcher and doctoral candidate in the field of education at Drake University. I am studying experiences with student-faculty advisory programs. I appreciate your honesty and cooperation as you answer the following questions.

Please use a #2 pencil. Use the following scale for verification of the themes identified from a survey completed six months ago.

A. Strongly agree    B. Agree    C. Disagree    D. Strongly disagree    E. No opinion

1. Advisors are available and easy to talk to.
2. Communication about school events and activities is an important benefit of advisement.
3. Although advisors care about our academic progress, the student is the only one that can make it happen.
4. The educational benefit of advisement is the help with selecting the courses I should take in high school.
5. My advisor has helped me feel that I belong at school by encouraging my active participation in school activities.
6. In advisement I have had an opportunity to meet people I would never have known.
7. It is important in a school this size to have small groups like this where a student has a connection throughout their high school experience.
8. The perfect activity in our advisory group would be to relax and talk about an issue that is important to members of our group.
9. I like having an advisory group that I belong to where I can be myself and not be judged by anyone.
10. Advisement is only as good as the advisor.



## Appendix F

## Complete List of Respondent Comments. Survey(1) Item 38

## School A

- It helped me meet friends and at the beginning of the year it helped me get to my classes and find things.
- Our teacher/advisor is enthusiastic about advisement and that is a lot of the reason why advisement can be fun.
- I can be open to everyone.
- 1-Everyone gets along 2-Everyone is positive.
- He is a really fun guy and I enjoy meeting with him 'cuz he's so funny sometimes.
- I like advisement. I get the chance to voice my opinion about different subjects.
- Fun/have togetherness.
- I've talked to people who I might have never talked to if there was no advisement.
- I get to do homework and be with a friend.
- A place to relax and eat donuts and talk. The advisors are nice; we discuss things. They help with schedules.
- None, less class time.
- None
- We get to talk with each other. We do our four-year plan.
- None
- Talking about problems. We have food. Advisement is fun.
- Get to know people from different groups.
- Share ideas.
- Fixing problems
- Communication. Involvement
- We talk a lot. We're a very social group and we have a lot of fun!
- Our strengths are that there are a variety of people in our advisement so you see others' points of view.
- Everyone has a voice.
- Offers a time to get away from schoolwork.
- Strengths-I do not find any positive points; moreover, I find no benefit in having Advisory groups; furthermore, in three years I have honestly gained nothing from our advisement activities.
- Fun and its not an actual class so we get a break from school.
- Listen to each other; become acquainted with new people.
- Close, fun, keep up on school events, help with school, food.
- Share/meet with other new people. Introduce me into a new school.
- It's fun. Keep up on school news.
- We are pretty good about remembering treats.
- Food
- Bringage of food.
- We talk about current events.
- Food is good.
- Sometimes we get food, but overall I think it is pointless. Mr. A is pretty cool.

- We get food.
- We get food.
- You can't make people get to know each other. Advisement is pointless.
- They talk about your grades and encourage you to keep it up.
- 36 surveys contained no written response at all.

### School B

- Very social, easy to talk to if I have a problem, offers advice or solutions to the problem.
- We all get along.
- We do talk and discuss things somewhat.
- No comment
- We got to meet students in other grades.
- We got to know each other well.
- Help each other.
- They help you and respect you. They listen to you. She lets you leave early.
- Time for a break and meet other people.
- It helped me get used to my school. It allowed me to meet new people.
- Good way to meet people and get acquainted with older students and school.
- Helpful, nice, respecting, honest, caring, trusting.
- We talk about things.
- Good concepts.
- Strengths-not much. Can make a few more friends.
- Chance to meet others.
- We talk and I get out my feelings.
- Let's me know more about what is going on in my school.
- Learn stuff about what is happening around the school. Advisory groups make class shorter.
- We can talk, get snacks sometimes, and do homework we didn't get to do. He is my psyc. teacher.
- We all listen and cooperate with each other. Each week we have a new activity.
- Helps me keep track of all school's things that go on.
- Not to many people.
- It helped me get used to my school. It allowed me to meet new people.
- It's all freshmen.
- It's fun.
- It's fun and you meet your class.
- This class is fun.
- Nice, cool, respectful.
- Talking with other people.
- I know the people.
- I know the people.
- It's fun.
- Getting a chance to get to know other students you would not normally talk to.

- I'm always happy!
- There are really no strengths. We only talk about what goes on in classrooms.
- He tries to get us involved.
- I learn something new about School B every week.
- It helped me in school.
- Talk about school activities.
- Talk about problems, concerns, etc. Look forward to group.
- We talk about what we've done the last week.
- It is good.
- Mrs. N. is nice; she keeps us well informed.
- It gives us time to talk to our friends in our groups.
- Made it a fun relaxing environment. Gives us a no strings attached break from classes.
- It's a good break from the day. My advisor is nice and I like her.
- Sometimes we get candy. Candy makes everything better.
- No work. Relieves everyday/week stress of school. Candy!
- Being able to talk to anyone. Having fun in this group.
- It's a place where you can talk to an adult about problems you have. It's every week.
- Communication.
- Free suckers.
- All my ability that I have a neutral.
- I check my e-mail.
- We rock it hard when we're in advocacy. We rock it hard when we're not in advocacy.
- But most of all we rock it super hard when I got ma hunnies.
- Strengths-no disagreements, friendly atmosphere.
- 49 surveys contained no written response.

### School C

- We can talk to each other easily. We are open. We are also caring.
- It's a way to track our progress as a student.
- Strengths-good time to spend with helpful advisor, fun, help reflect on year.
- I don't have an opinion.
- Everybody gets together.
- Talking, good place to study.
- I don't think there are any. Sorry!
- Strengths-always know about activities. She encourages us to get involved.
- One of the only strengths I see is in our school advisor means school starts later.
- Our group gets along well. We have good group discussions about worldly issues.
- We can talk to each other. Keep in touch with social events.
- Meet new people, helps you think about the future.
- Gotten all my work in.
- Get things done on time.
- We can all talk with each other.
- Discussing school related activities.
- In our advisory groups we are allowed to speak our mind.

- We can feel comfortable bringing up comments or concerns.
- None, doesn't help at all.
- 1-We feel welcome. 2-We receive help that we need.
- We have time that we can use to write reflections or work on homework.
- We have the opportunity to talk with each other about certain topics.
- It helps me feel involved, helps me make friends and learn more about school.
- Advisors demonstrate caring for well being and success of students.
- We get scheduling done in advisors.
- It helps learn some responsibility by having to come every Tuesday at the same time and to have to get reflections done by certain deadlines.
- None
- They tell you what you need to get done, what you need to pass the grade.
- Talking.
- Attending school and advisor.
- Nice, funny people to talk to, very easygoing atmosphere.
- Lots of opportunity for students to socialize while learning important ideas.
- Laid back, fun (sometimes).
- Laid back, fun, all get along, get stuff done.
- My advisor helped me choose classes for next year.
- Prepares me for next year.
- We all get along and talk well together.
- Gets me out of other classes.
- Nothing good, it's all evil.
- We all talk a lot.
- It gives time to socialize and get work done.
- Laid back.
- The advisor is a wonderful teacher, so you can feel free to talk to her.
- There are no strengths of the advisory program or my group.
- You can use other people to help you.
- We're close. I can talk to my advisors whenever I need to.
- My teacher is very kind.
- Meeting people, time to do other work.
- We get help signing up for other classes.
- Mr. W. for advisor. The location of the group.
- Meet people in different grades.
- Start school late.
- Getting to know each other and meeting new people.
- Good advisor, we get along well, we can joke around.
- Cool advisor; sleep in some.
- I find very little comes from advisor. Some good things are doing quality work.
- It helps us think and write essays.
- Talk about school events, get classes scheduled. Questions freshman have.
- Just to get my reflection done.
- The strengths of my advisory group is informing us of current school material
- It helps to provide us with a positive attitude and gets us involved.
- Help inform me of things going on in school. Help me meet new people/teachers.

- Don't wake up until 8:00.
- Discuss events; help schedule next year.
- Talking with peers in the group.
- Talk a lot; check with our teachers about us.
- Sleep.
- We can talk about babies.
- My advisor is very helpful, has a positive attitude, and honestly cares about us.
- Tries to help us realize what we've learned and how we've grown academically.
- It's a place to get information on your next year's schedule.
- Everyone must take this class so we all get needed information.
- There are none, except I hear dates and times of activities.
- Strengths-she cares about us.
- Work really hard on reflections and getting them word-processed.
- Allows us to reflect on progress.
- We have a little study time.
- Open communication, caring concerned environment, helpful, good listeners.
- Meet different people that I normally wouldn't talk to.
- It has helped me to strengthen all of my learning skills by using the district goals.
- It is fun to look back and see how far I have grown since freshman year.
- I also believe it has done a great job preparing me for college.
- Get to know people from different grades. Informed of important school activities.
- Get to meet new people from different grades and informs us of school activities.
- Talk to each other easily, get time to do artifacts, have donuts and talk.
- It can be fun and enjoying. Can create help for students in need.
- Advisors is good because I gets people together, who don't normally work together to accomplish a common goal.
- Students talk well with each other. Seniors help out underclassmen.
- 21 surveys contained no written response.

Appendix G  
Complete List of Respondent Comments. Survey(1) Item 39

School A

- Need more time in advisement.
- It isn't that much fun.
- Quality discussions.
- Boring. Waste of time.
- Getting all activities done.
- Some bad attitudes.
- We don't have any!
- It gets boring sometimes.
- Non-participants make advisement session harder to get things done.
- I don't like being put on the spot.
- 1-Sometimes the activities we do are pointless. 2-?
- Sometimes it gets really boring and I don't have many friends in there so it gets boring.
- No one likes to do anything.
- Bad treats
- My advisor is not very personable; instead he is very rigid.
- I don't like the teacher because he doesn't help at all.
- The activities and videos are sometimes stupid and don't have any result.
- 39. Boring, pointless.
- I think it's a waste of time.
- Kind of boring.
- Every aspect.
- Not enough food.
- Sometimes idiots forget to bring treats.
- Sometimes the forgetfulness of treats at times.
- We forget to bring treats a lot.
- Food isn't good when nobody brings it.
- I pretty much hate advisement. I dread coming to school on Tuesdays.
- We don't really do anything.
- Pointless, like this survey. Why go?
- Boring.
- Advisement is a waste of time and effort.
- Our weaknesses we don't all participate.
- Most of the activities we do have no benefit to my day or year or career. There is no point because we all know that no one wants to be there.
- There needs to be more organized activities.
- We don't have fun.
- Weaknesses
- Doing stupid planned activities.
- Have a tendency to put each other down...but in a teasing way.
- Not meet long enough sometimes.

- We don't do anything productive. People don't take advisement seriously.
- 37 surveys had no written response.

#### School B

- Makes us take or do a lot of surveys.
- We do too much talking and surveys.
- We don't have enough interaction.
- No comment.
- We don't discuss anything that's important/interesting to us. It seems to be about the teachers.
- Criticizing
- We are made to go. It is really boring.
- It is a waste of time because most of the people don't come to the group(s) anyway.
- Is too short, needed to be longer.
- People would not come to the class a lot.
- No one comes sometimes!
- I don't know.
- Bad programming.
- Weaknesses-The people that need it don't come. Not long enough to be at all constructive.
- Low attendance by other students. I go, but others don't!
- No weakness. Well, too many opinions.
- Need more help and planning for future classes or careers. More activities.
- I have no weaknesses in Advisory groups.
- Doesn't do too much.
- Our group is not very big. I hate walking up and down the hill.
- Doesn't really talk about schoolwork.
- The people don't really talk aloud in a group.
- It's all freshmen.
- All freshman.
- Too many people in class and all freshman.
- I don't like homework.
- No one likes advocacy it's just a place for people to jip.
- N/A
- N/A
- No answer
- This paper we have to do.
- I'm never weak!
- There are really no weaknesses, except when the upper clansman are talking upon themselves.
- Weaknesses are only four people talk.
- No weaknesses.
- Don't know.
- Sometimes need more interesting activities.
- Not very many people come.
- There is not much good.

- Not many people come.
- We don't talk much about what's going on in school unless we have to.
- Shouldn't try too hard to make set plans.
- There's no real unity within the group.
- Of nine people, talk regularly to one girl and practically never to the others. No one else really talks.
- Needs to talk with everyone not just some.
- Some people don't like or don't care about this group.
- It's short.
- Not enough time to communicate and talk.
- Ugly kids.
- It sucks.
- See above (All my ability that I have are neutral).
- The time for the fallen angels has come. They will eat our scalps as we roast.
- I'm scared and there's only one thing that can save us
- Tenacious D.
- Weaknesses-Advisor is not actively involved with students during advisory group time.
- Students are apathetic toward class in general.
- Lack of activities.
- 51 surveys contained no written response.

#### School C

- Group is getting big, harder to get acquainted with each other.
- It seems like a waste of time.
- Weaknesses-P. Doesn't have any.
- I don't have any.
- Most people don't take advantage of the study time.
- No one listens, they either sleep, do homework, or talk.
- Weaknesses- Boring, doesn't help me feel that I belong, doesn't help with questions.
- Advisors is just more added pressure that is not needed for a student like me that going
- Into my senior year am worried about graduation.
- It's just more things I have to worry about completing to graduate.
- Our advisory group doesn't get motivated well.
- The reflections don't make us any better. I don't know why we have to do it.
- Doesn't really help you with school or career planning.
- Hasn't gotten work in on time.
- Don't always have reflections done.
- We don't need to come every Tuesday. We often just sit around.
- One Tuesday a month would be plenty.
- Working together as one team.
- We are not very on task. We don't do much work, so a lot of people don't have artifacts finished.



- It's all pointless.
- It's sometimes just gets to be a waste of time.
- Makes us lose class time.
- Despite demonstration of caring, system is relatively ineffective in changing student behaviors.
- Waste of time. Sit and talk, eat donuts all period. Reflections don't mean much to people.
- Sit and talk with same people each year.
- I think it is kind of pointless because we never really do anything and it's a waste of time.
- Talking about stuff.
- The length of time.
- Getting reflections in on time.
- My portfolio.
- Too much time to do little work.
- Too much requirements.
- Gets annoying, pointless at times.
- A lot of people don't like advisors.
- You don't always get donuts.
- It's boring.
- Some people don't like advisors.
- Boring. Nothing important goes on.
- Boring.
- We all talk about our personal lives. We sit the whole time and do nothing. It's not fun.
- I don't think there are any.
- Mornings.
- The students don't all know each other very much, making it boring.
- The advisory program is a waste of time!
- It's not something the students want to do. We don't see the purpose to it other than its required.
- Repetition-I think seniors don't need to come every Tuesday considering
- We've heard the same thing for four years.
- Boring.
- Stress, waste of time, most people don't show, not fun, boring, he doesn't talk to us.
- We don't share information with the Student Council.
- It doesn't there's any point it takes up time.
- It's harder for some people so they choose not to do them.
- Being in some rooms that aren't very nice.
- Boring, no point, I would rather be sleeping or taking another class right now.
- Meeting on the stage, kind of boring.
- Boring doesn't deal with my life, waste of time, reflections.
- I think advisors are a bad idea it causes stress to some degree.
- Artifacts are pointless, just a technicality for having the program.
- Could do everything we are doing if we didn't have artifacts.
- Boring and pointless.

- The weakness of my advisor group is the lack of care toward portfolios.
- No time for reflections and such. No structure, just sit there.
- It's an extra twenty minutes of talk time in the morning.
- I never get anything done and all we do is sit and talk.
- I don't like advisors! Pointless to me. Some people don't talk.
- Sleep.
- We are forced to take surveys.
- Many students don't understand the goals of the program.
- Many students don't want to come for 25 minutes in the morning.
- The program seems unorganized.
- Advisors are Often confused. Many advisors are having different standards and qualifications.
- They said it would be self-directed and it's not. It's supposed to be one-on-one classes with the teachers but there are like 25.
- It's unorganized. Boring. Nobody ever gets anything done. It's a joke.
- Requirements change yearly regarding what we need to put in our portfolio.
- My advisor has changed five times and they have no interest or knowledge
- In the fields I am interested in.
- My group also has no common interests so we don't talk.
- My advisor really never had us do our advisor work, but mainly schoolwork.
- Can't keep track of her advisor stuff.
- Do more activities rather than just do reflections every Tuesday.
- Boring, unorganized, a complete waste of time and a joke the way its fun and what we are "supposed" to get out it.
- We never do anything and it is a serious waste of time.
- Repetitive throughout the years. Some students don't follow through with assignments.
- Maybe need more opportunities to work on reflections.
- I don't believe that seniors should come every Tuesday because by our senior year we know the process and most to all of our work is done outside of advisors.
- I think we should only have to come once a month.
- Unnecessary that we must come every Tuesday.
- I can't say this process is completely worthless, but I don't know if it will impact me in the near future.
- Unnecessary we come every Tuesday morning. No exception for tardiness.
- Doesn't really do a lot. Most pick tests or projects that are A's or good.
- 
- I hate having to come to class and do homework and everything else and not even get a credit
- For four years of doing it.
- The fact that every Tuesday morning is the time, it should be less often.
- Don't get anything done in class. We just discuss.
- 99. 24 surveys contained no written response.

## Appendix H

## Complete List of Respondent Comments. Survey(1) Item 40

## School A

- None
- To be happy when you have advisement because it is taking out of school time for class.
- I love it that we get treats. That makes it all good!
- Most kids do not like advisement and think it is a waste of time.
- None
- I like advisement.
- The student drew a smiley face in the comment area.
- No additional comments. Thank you anyway.
- I see that there is no absolute justifications or requirement for the advisement program to be
- Maintained at the our high school.
- I have no additional comments.
- See #2 (Pointless, like this survey. Why go?)
- Get rid of it.
- I don't see the point in the group-it's a moral idea-but it doesn't work the way people dream it should.
- Advisement is great.
- 63 surveys had no written response.

## School B

- I have no opinion.
- I have no opinion.
- No comment.
- Don't have any.
- Need more time for a break.
- Can't teach old dogs new tricks.
- None
- It's fun.
- N/A
- N/A
- No answer
- It's fun.
- Not applicable.
- This is cool.
- We should have food every time we go to advocacy and reward the students who do come to advocacy.
- Instead of planning, you'll get further by simply letting conversations happen.
- I don't think this program would have any positive impact on students who don't want

to be impacted.

- Drawing, pentagram, dark, Wicca
- Hi!
- Free suckers are cool.
- Not any.
- The student drew a creature in the space provided.
- The only purpose this class serves is as a twenty minute study hall to review or complete assignments. I have not grown closer to students, teacher, nor have I benefited from this class.
- We should have advocacy more than once a week.
- 78 surveys contained no written response.

#### School C

- Need more time and stuff for planning classes and careers in the future.
- I don't have an opinion.
- In my opinion, an advisor is really stupid. Also, in my opinion, advisor is a big waste of time.
- It is also very boring.
- I like advisors. I think we should have more than once a week.
- Advisors is unnecessary and useless.
- None
- None
- This survey was really boring and wasted everyone's time.
- This survey took valuable learning time away from me in advisory group.
- Advisors help us grow throughout the years.
- Advisor is an OK thing. Take up time, but school ain't my strength.
- Fun when we do class activities.
- I believe if you're all caught up with your reflections you shouldn't have to come. Then more people
- Would turn in reflections.
- This was such a waste of time.
- I believe that this advisee program is a waste of time.
- Tonight, I will present my advisee portfolio and when I say I've learned through the district learning goals, I say it because I have to, not because I believe it.
- In all fairness, it's not the advisor's fault, it's the program.
- In general, I strongly disagree with the advisor program.
- I don't think the advisor program has served its purpose.
- Have more assemblies related to advisor groups (i.e.: yard day and the assembly we had).
- After tonight, May 15, advisors is cashed.
- My advisor was really nice, but it was still bad.
- I don't see the "need" for this program and to be truthful, I don't see anything that I've
- Received or learned from being in this program.
- I think that the program is beneficial and keeps students motivated and it also gets a

variety of students involved with school.

- Kids who come tardy to advisor must answer to the whip-bearing Mr. \_\_\_\_\_.
- Mr. W. is pretty cool.
- I just felt like this was telling me stuff I already knew that was making me a better person.
- It almost felt like a support group for the depressed.
- I think it's nice, it's trying to make you a better person, but that's what life experiences are for.
- So you can become your own person. It just seemed like another class I didn't have a need for.
- 77 surveys contained no written response.